

## **Environment and Anthropology**

**By Prof. Marek Konarzewski**

**Students:** Aleksandra Brylska; Aleksandra Jabłońska; Toni Romani; Aliaksandra Shrubok

**Faculty:** Dr hab. Kalina Burnat; Prof. Paweł Golik; Dr Clive Hicks; Prof. Zbigniew Kloch; Prof. Marek Konarzewski (Head of the Section); Dr Monika Kujawska; Dr hab. Łukasz Łuczaj; Prof. Joanna Pijanowska, Dr Sebastian Szymański (Moderator of the Section)

### **The goals that are to be achieved in the 2019/2020 Academic Year**

The major goal of the section “Environment and Anthropology” will be to provide participating students with deepened knowledge and understanding of his/her research project vis a vis other projects of the section and the whole PhD program. The seminar program has been constructed by harmonizing specific topics suggested by students and their advisors. As a result, the seminars will be related to:

- Semiotic perception and analysis of the environment and its consequences for environmental policy and protection
- Identification of ways to bridge the gap between quantitative and qualitative nature of environmental research in natural sciences and humanities
- Practical applications of the perception and investigation of the environment, particularly with respect to human-animal interactions and responsible research conduct

### **The means that will be used to achieve those goals**

There will be 9 seminars (roughly one seminar a month), 3 h each: on Thursdays 17.10, 14.11, 12.12 i 16.01.2020, 20.02, 12.03, 16.04, 14.05, 11.06.2020, at 12:00-300pm.

The seminar will be chaired by a respective student, so each student will be responsible for preparation of one seminar/semester. The seminar will consist of an introductory presentation by the assigned student (45 mins), then shorter interventions by the remaining students (15 mins each). The remaining time will be devoted to general discussion.

### **Evaluation policy**

Student’s work will be evaluated based on an aggregated score of his/her performance as a chairman, activities during seminars and short essays prepared after each of the seminar. The essays are supposed to concentrate on the relevance of the subject of the seminar to the participant’s PhD research project.

### **Topics of seminars**

#### **Aleksandra Brylska**

##### **1. Conservation and toxicity. The politics of environmental protection.**

During the seminar, I propose to think about issues related to environmental protection. I would like to consider why certain areas are protected and others are not. I would like to ask a question how narratives on the protection of ecosystems are used in the case of contaminated areas, and what cultural conditions are behind these narratives. In this context, the reflexion on idea of wildness and Nature will be extremely important to me.

#### Bibliography:

1. Shannon Cram, *Wild and Science Wastland: Conservation Politics in the Nuclear Wilderness*, "Environmental Humanities", vol. 7, 2015 s. 89–105.
2. William Cronon, *The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature*, in: *ibidem*, *Upcoming Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, New York, W.W. Norton&Co., 1995, s. 69–90.
3. Timothy Morton, *Ecology without Nature. Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England, 2007, [fragment].
4. David G. Havlick, *Bombs Away. Militarization, Conservation, and Ecological Restoration*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 2018, [fragment].

## **2. Embodied politics. On the role of Animals in Discourse.**

During the seminar, I suggest thinking about the role of animals in social discourse. In what context does the animal become a threat? What role do animals play in political debates - are they really about nonhuman beings, or are they becoming a metaphor for social tensions? The central concept that I would like to reflect on during the meeting is the term invasive species and its cultural conditions.

#### Bibliography:

1. Fred Pearce, *The New Wild. Why Invasive Species Will Be Nature's Salvation*, Beacon Press, Boston, 2015.
2. Michel Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language (1969)*, [fragment].
3. Jens-Christian Svenning, *Future Megafaunas: A Historical Perspective on the Potential*
4. for a Wilder Anthropocene, in: *Ghost of the Anthropocene.*, ed. Anna Tsing et al., University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis/London, 2017, p. G67-G87.

## **Aliaksadra Shrubok**

### **1. Tim Ingold's concept of 'the perception of the environment' and ecosemiotic perspective on humanenvironment interactions**

Traditional anthropological approach, based on the fundamental ontological dichotomy between nature and culture, presupposes study of nature in its relation to human needs and goals. According to this perspective, Nature is considered to be a mere thing (or collection of things) that could be studied as tools or as commodities. Recent anthropological reflections quest such a vision trying not to reduce humannature relations to economy, history or politics and focus on both practical engagement with the environment and the affinity established between humans and non-humans. During the seminar, I would like to discuss T. Ingold's approach and semiotic perspective on comprehending human-nature relations. I would like to address the following questions: How T. Ingold's concept of 'the perception of the environment' could be helpful in ethnobotanical studies? How an eco-semiotic perspective could be applied to study human-environment interaction and changes in the Umwelt? What are the advantages and limitations of the approaches and (how) is it possible to combine the both approaches in the research?

#### Bibliography:

1. Ingold, T. 1992. Culture and the perception of the environment. In *Bush base: forest farm. Culture, environment and development*, eds E. Croll and D. Parkin. London: Routledge, pp. 39–56.
2. Kull, K. 1998. Semiotic ecology: different natures in the semiosphere. *Σημειωτική: Sign System Studies* 26, pp. 344–371.
3. Kohn, E. 2013. *How forests think: toward an anthropology beyond the human*. University of California Press, Berkeley. (The book itself is about 300 pp so I would propose some excerpts for reading later).

## **2. Local ecological knowledge as a tool for sustainable development and the site of a conflict**

During the seminar, I would like to discuss how the paradigm of sustainable development and politicization of culture and knowledge affects the local knowledge and its research. How best to apprehend and analyze local ecological knowledge? How to deal with the degradation of local knowledge? How and to which extent such knowledge can be effectively and ethically researched and used?

#### Bibliography:

1. Alexiades, M. 2009. The cultural and economic globalisation of traditional environmental knowledge systems. In: Heckler, S., ed. *Landscape, Power and Process: A New Environmental Knowledge Synthesis*. Oxford: Berghahn, pp. 68 – 98.
2. Dabezies, J.M. 2018. Heritagization of nature and its influence on local ecological knowledge in Uruguay. In *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, DOI:10.1080/13527258.2018.1428663

### **Toni Romani**

#### **What can studies on great apes tell us about humans and evolution of culture?**

1. During this seminar we will discuss why and how humans became so different from other great apes. What led us to descend from the trees, walk upright, develop big brains and spoken language? I will incorporate into the seminar my own proposed research on nesting behavior and terrestriality of chimpanzees.

#### **2. Doing research in difficult situations (health, environment, politics, social): how much does this limit our endeavor?**

The people and animals we interact with in the course of research activities can unintentionally (or intentionally) bias information we gather. Researchers in turn often unintentionally affect behaviours and interactions between subjects of their interest. During this seminar we will discuss biases incurred by the actors of the field research illustrating it with case study on the pitfalls of community based conservation.

#### Bibliography:

1. McGrew (2004) *The cultured chimpanzee*. Cambridge university press

2. Johanson, Johanson and Edgar (1994) *Ancestors*. Villard books, New York
3. Sriram et al. (2009) *Surviving field research*

## **Aleksandra Jabłońska**

### **1. Can we measure curiosity?**

During the meeting, participants will address issues such as curiosity and animal play and its influence on cognition and development. Furthermore, the participants will get to know and discuss problems connected with the definition and measurement of curiosity and related behaviours. We will together ponder whether play is a manifestation of curiosity, how we can recognise it and describe the functions play served in the animal world.

#### **Bibliography:**

1. Byrne, R. W. (2013). Animal curiosity. *Current Biology*, 23(11), R469-R470.
2. Federspiel, I. G., Boeckle, M., von Bayern, A. M. P., & Emery, N. J. (2019). Exploring individual and social learning in jackdaws (*Corvus monedula*). *Learning & behavior*, 1-13.
3. Jacobs, I., Kabadayi, C., & Osvath, M. (2019). The Development of Sensorimotor Cognition in Common Ravens (*Corvus corax*) and its Comparative Evolution. *Animal Behavior and Cognition*, 6(3), 194-212.

### **2. How the city affects its inhabitants**

The discussion during this meeting will revolve around the topic of co-existence of humans and birds in the city. Specific issues which should help start the investigation will include the health problems of birds scavenging urban trash, methods of improving the well-being of birds living in the urban environment, methods and procedures of rehabilitation. We will together ponder how the humans-animals interactions should look and how we can share urban space.

#### **Bibliography:**

1. Townsend, A. K., Staab, H. A., & Barker, C. M. (2019). Urbanization and elevated cholesterol in American Crows. *The Condor*, 121(3), duz040.
2. Preininger, D., Schoas, B., Kramer, D., & Boeckle, M. (2019). Waste Disposal Sites as All-You-Can Eat Buffets for Carrion Crows (*Corvus corone*). *Animals*, 9(5), 215.
3. McCoy, D. E., Schiestl, M., Neilands, P., Hassall, R., Gray, R. D., & Taylor, A. H. (2019). New Caledonian Crows Behave Optimistically after Using Tools. *Current Biology*, 29(16), 2737-2742.
4. [https://www.ted.com/talks/joshua\\_klein\\_on\\_the\\_intelligence\\_of\\_crows](https://www.ted.com/talks/joshua_klein_on_the_intelligence_of_crows)
5. Klein, J. (2007). A vending machine for crows. Diss. New York University, Interactive Telecommunications Program.