

GPBY 893 – Radical Circulations: Geographies of Waste and Recycling

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Format	Lectures, discussions, and debates based on key texts, case studies and videos	
Contact Time	3 hour weekly in-class lecture; Tuesday 11:30AM - 2:30PM	
Location	Macintosh Corry RM E314	
Office Hours	Tuesday 3:00 pm to 4:00pm	

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Climate Change, Just Energy Transition, Degrowth, Inclusive Growth, Net Zero, Green Economy, and Circular Economy pepper most, if not all discussions about our common low or zero-carbon future. Each of these invariably focus on reducing global dependences on hydrocarbons/fossil fuels, and so aggressively promote investment and uptake in green and renewable energies and technologies. No sector - agriculture, manufacturing, transport, energy, mining, telecommunications, finance, and service and retail – is removed from, or immune to, the accelerating pace of the transformation – decarbonization. As all the sectors mentioned above produce waste in one form or another, managing waste – hazardous and nonhazardous – is at the center of the global drive for not only decarbonization, but also dematerialization.

Given the above, this course takes an interdisciplinary approach to understanding waste, its creation, and its centrality to the expansion of global capital accumulation, paying particular attention to the social, political, and economic processes that render certain material objects/commodities, spaces/places, and populations as waste in contemporary economics. Equally important, the course engages with current debates about recycling (e.g., urban mining within informal waste networks) as part of the solution to the global waste problem. Recycling, couched in ideas such as the circular economy, and green and sustainable development is also increasingly explored as a means to ease anxieties around critical minerals scarcity - considering projected demand to support the energy transition. Specifically, the course asks students to think about what waste streams become commodified through recycling, the conditions under which recycling takes place, who is doing the job of recycling, and why. There are SIX CASE STUDIES, scheduled to coincide with the course content they are related to. We will review (1) informal electronic waste recycling in Ghana (i.e., the role of urban waste scavengers in subsidizing local solid waste management and also international demand for scrap metals); (2) Canada's plan for the long-term management of used nuclear fuel (i.e., Adaptive Phase Management Plan); (3) the Circular Cars Initiative led by the World Economic Forum; (4) Management in the Oil and Gas Waste in Guyana; (5) Textile waste dumping in Kenya; and (6) Lithium-ion Battery Recycling (Li-Cycle) in Kingston. The course draws on scholarly works in political ecology, critical resource geographies, commodity chain analysis, environmental and social justice, the circular economy, black ecologies, and critical race. Please note this **seminar-based course**. Students are expected to take an **active role** in presentation and discussion.

SELECTED COURSE TOPICS

Waste, (Informal) Recycling, Commodity Chain, Circular Economy, Green Economy, Urban Mining, Green Capitalism, Informal Waste Economies, Racial Capitalism; Electronic Waste, Nuclear Waste, Used Textiles, Fast Fashion; Toxic Dumping, Labour