

Identity and Pacha

Course Syllabus

Schedule: Varies per semester. Class sessions are 3 hours each with a 15-minute break in the middle.

Lead Instructor: Chelsea Viteri, chelsea@pachaysana.org

Co-Instructors: Daniel Acosta, Daniel Bryan, Javier Cevallos Perugachi

Office Hours: Anytime outside of normal class hours. Just ask.

Course Description:

Pacha is a Kichwa word that is usually interpreted as “earth,” and *Pachamama* as “mother earth.” However, those translations come from a limited epistemological framework. According to indigenous Andean scholars, *Pacha* refers to the time-space continuum, or as the “everything around and inside us.” This course asks students and their local community counterparts to challenge their identities by broadening their epistemological and ontological lenses to see their individual and collective lives as they relate to *Pacha*. To synthesize this complicated process, we ask participants to examine who they are as related to the ever-changing ecology in which they live. For this course, ecology is approached broadly, referring to the Greek origin on the word, *oikos*, meaning *home*. We examine our home as an interconnected “place” where our ecology is the triad of our immediate territory (*llakta* in Kichwa), our surrounding natural environment (*allpa* in Kichwa), and our global and pluriversal space (*pacha*). Throughout the course, we use an interdisciplinary lens to examine “who we are” as related to this diverse understanding of ecology, taking into consideration that our ever-changing environment includes an ever-changing human story. Toward the end of the course, after examining certain theories and case studies, we will imagine the reconstruction of our identities contextualized to *pacha*, place, ecology, *oikos* and home.

General Objective

Students and their counterparts will develop a theoretical foundation on the relationship between humanity and ecology, and by applying the concepts to our current lived reality, they will shape informed opinions as to how this relationship, as well as our individual and collective identities, are altered and transformed due to ever-changing global and local realities.

Specific Objectives

- Develop an interdisciplinary awareness of the relationship between humanity and ecology
- Progress in how each one of us defines our self and our collective identities with relationship to the changing world (and communities) in which we live.
- Collect and analyze local (and/or regional) stories with relationship to the learned concepts in order to develop a clear understanding of the social, economic and cultural consequences at both the local and global levels.
- Identify local, regional and global problems, developing tools to help us think proactively and generate alternative solutions to problems, borrowing methodologies from other courses such as Theater for Social Change and Design and Evaluation of Projects.

General Content

This course will explore *identity* and *pacha* from a cross-disciplinary perspective, pulling from the fields of human & political ecology, cultural anthropology, sociology, education studies and the humanities. The course takes us through a series of questions that are reformed each semester according to the lived reality

of our host community, always asking us to consider: a) how we observe and reflect the reality around us; b) how identity is shaped via the human-ecology relationship (from an interdisciplinary perspective), c) how modern changes to the ecology affect identity, d) how specific examples (Ecuadorian case studies) allow us to understand the complexity of identity; and finally, e) how we can rethink our collective identity (or identities), even empower our identities, by examining our globalized society as interconnected local communities.

Sample guiding questions:

In this semester, we explore identity in the context of a cross-section between ecological and public health crises.

- What is our ontological relationship with the earth and the environment? What epistemologies inform our relationship with the earth?
- How do our beliefs about the environment affect this relationship?
- What role does Pacha have in this cross-section? What is the impact on community? How does the cross-section affect differently our individual vs collective identities?
- What are the next big questions we should be asking? What practical applications exist with relationship to my exploration of identity?

Evaluation:

Journal	20%
Project 1	15%
Project 2	15%
Project 3	15%
Project 4	15%
Class participation	20%

Projects and Reflections: Each project is described in the course calendar. After the presentation of each project, you should turn in a reflection about your experience no later than a week after the presentation. Your observations/reflections should center three essential aspects of the project: 1) the creative process of putting together the presentation/project, 2) the experience of presenting the project in class, and 3) all post-presentation processing including any resulting discussion or intrapersonal reflection. Each entry should be written in Spanish and be between 500 and 700 words. Include no less than 2 readings from the course in each reflection.

Journals: There are a total of 4 journal questions, which are the same questions that are guiding the process. We ask that you respond to each question from the perspective of your own ever-evolving identity. In each journal please *substantiate your reflections with the course readings*. These journals represent your opportunity to dive deeper into and question the individual and collective self. Each entry should be between 500 and 750 words. (If you prefer, you can do one final project that responds to all of these questions at the end of the semester before the last day of class. If you elect this option, please inform Chelsea ahead of time and be sure to journal throughout the class, or it will be too hard to capture your personal journal.)

Readings - Each semester we vary our readings to accommodate to the specific questions we are asking. The provided list represent works of which we usually include chapters or sections in almost every semester. Note: In addition to assigned academic readings, we assign complementary news/internet articles and ask students to choose self-selected readings to complement their specific interests and projects.

- Acosta, Alberto. (2011). "El buen vivir en el camino al post-desarrollo, algunas reflexiones al andar." En G. Weber (Ed.) *Debates sobre cooperación y modelos de desarrollo: Perspectivas desde la sociedad civil en el Ecuador*. CIUDAD
- Bryan, Daniel. (2020). *El Mito de la Identidad*. Unpublished manuscript.
- De Sousa Santos, Boaventura. (2011). "Epistemologías del Sur". *Utopía y praxis latinoamericana*, 16(54), 17-39.
- Donoso-Miranda, Valentina Paz (2014). "Pensamiento decolonial de Walter Mignolo: América Latina." *Temas de Nuestra América. Revista de Estudios Latinoamericanos*, 30(56), 45-56
- Dussel, Enrique. (1994). *El encubrimiento del otro: hacia el origen del mito de la modernidad*. UMSA.
- Escobar, Arturo. (2005). *Más allá del Tercer Mundo: Globalización y Diferencia*. Instituto Colombiano de Antropología e Historia.
- Escobar, Arturo. (2011). *Una minga para el Posdesarrollo*. Programa Democracia y Transformación Global.
- Espinosa Apolo, Manuel. (2000). *Los Mestizos Ecuatorianos*. Eskeletra.
- Kimmerer, Robin Wall. (2013). *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teaching of Plants*. Milkweed Editions.
- Macas, Luis. (2011), "Sumak Kawsay: Diferentes vertientes para un Nuevo paradigma de desarrollo." En G. Weber (Ed.) *Debates sobre cooperación y modelos de desarrollo: Perspectivas desde la sociedad civil en el Ecuador*. CIUDAD
- Noroña, María Belén. (2014). "La toma de la laguna". Abya-Yala
- Noroña, María Belén. (2016). "Recreando territorios: teorías territoriales y estrategias Indígenas emergentes para acceder y controlar territorios" (Unpublished manuscript)
- Shiva, Vandana. (2004). "La Mirada del Ecofemenismo (3 textos)." *Polis en línea*. 9
- Walsh, Catherine. (2009). "Interculturalidad crítica y educación intercultural." *Construyendo interculturalidad crítica*.
- Walsh, Catherine. (2017). *Pedagogías Decoloniales: Prácticas insurgentes de resistir, (re)existir y (re)vivir Tomo II*. Abya-Yala.