



UNC
COLLEGE OF
ARTS & SCIENCES

Geography 804: Property and Resource Control

Wednesdays 12:30-3:20, 321 Carolina Hall
Elizabeth Havice

Dominant approaches to economic development and environmental conservation frequently situate property rights – particularly private, durable, transferable property rights that are recognized and enforced by the state – as a key for unlocking economic opportunity and environmental improvements small and large, local and global. But what is property? Is it a claim or an institution? Is it the right to exclude others? Is it a material thing?

This seminar will explore the theories and the institutions that mediate human interactions – particularly rights, access, ownership, rent and value – with a range of resources. We will begin with a survey of historical conceptions of property elaborated by political economist and legal scholars. From there, we will draw on critical legal scholarship, institutional economics and the institutionalist school to trace how ideas about property have changed and been formed over time. With this foundation, in the second half of the class, we will focus on how social organizations and actors, public and private, local to global, gain control over resources. We will consider literature on property from agrarian political economy, political ecology and planning in order to develop an understanding of strategies for resource control. Studies will explore property struggles around contemporary land and resource grabs, formalization and control over a range of life forms, and we will also leave room to select cases of interest to course participants.

