

The PHI BETA KAPPA Society

VISITING



SCHOLAR

PROGRAM

KENDRA
MCSWEENEY

OHIO STATE
UNIVERSITY

Professor of Geography

PUBLIC LECTURE
OFFERINGS

WHAT IS POLITICAL ECOLOGY? LESSONS FROM THE TREE OF HEAVEN

Political ecology posits that environmental issues are always sites of social contention and struggle. Using the example of the “invasive” Tree of Heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*), we’ll explore who wins and who loses, and what social injustices are corrected or intensified, when species and environments are managed in particular ways.

WHY ARE AMERICANS SO BAD AT GEOGRAPHY?

Americans are famous for their geographical ignorance, which has serious implications for citizenship and global understanding. How did this come about? And what can be done to ensure that future generations are more spatially literate?

THE DRUG WAR AND CLIMATE CHANGE: MAKING THE CONNECTIONS

The ‘war on drugs’ seems unrelated to climate change. But insights from long-term geographic research in Central America highlight how efforts to keep drugs out of the U.S. can have serious climate consequences for all of us.

THE STRANGE CASE OF COCA, A BIOGEOGRAPHICAL MYSTER

Cocaine is a drug in global demand. Yet the raw ingredient for cocaine, the coca plant (*Erythroxylum spp*)—is only grown in South America. This makes coca unique among lucrative—and widespread—illicit drug crops. What’s behind coca’s unique biogeography, and what’s at stake if it spreads beyond South America?

CLASSROOM DISCUSSION TOPICS



1. **THINKING LIKE A GEOGRAPHER**

What constitutes a 'geographical' perspective on the world? Geographic scholarship is inherently interdisciplinary, but all geographers share a vital analytical lens.

2. **WHAT ARE "MIXED-METHODS"?**

And how can this approach help me explore my research questions?

3. **SHORTER VERSION OF ANY OF THE PUBLIC LECTURES**