



Natural Causes: Essays in Ecological Marxism

By James O'Connor

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Economic growth since the Industrial Revolution has been achieved at great cost both to the natural environment and to the autonomy of communities. What can a Marxist perspective contribute to understanding this disturbing legacy, and mitigating its impact on future generations? Renowned social theorist James O'Connor shows how the policies and imperatives of business and government influence--and are influenced by--environmental and social change. Probing the relationship between economy, nature, and society, O'Connor argues that environmental and social crises pose a growing threat to capitalism itself. These illuminating essays and case studies demonstrate the power of ecological Marxist analysis for understanding our diverse environmental and social history, for grounding economic behavior in the real world, and for formulating and evaluating new political strategies.

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Editorial Review

Review

"James O'Connor's work is distinctive in that it constitutes the first fully developed, concrete analysis of how the undermining of the environment is actually undermining the conditions of production of the global capitalist society in which we live, threatening the very process of capital accumulation that lies at the heart of the modern world economy.... Brilliantly argued, O'Connor's work constitutes the indispensable starting point for a consideration of the interrelationship of socioeconomic and environmental crises in our time, and will be of immense interest to readers coming from a wide variety of perspectives. Readers of this volume will discover a rich body of work delving into a wide range of environmental problems, from environmental justice, to the Gulf War, to 'What is Ecological Socialism?'. This is a treasure-trove of environmental thought by one of the great social theorists of our day." --John Bellamy Foster, Co-Editor, *Organization & Environment*; author of *The Vulnerable Planet: A Short Economic History of the Environment*

"The neo-liberal pundits who dance on Marx's grave will hate this book. Whether exposing the hidden logic of the Gulf War or deciphering the relations of production in a new-growth forest, *Natural Causes* is an intellectual tour de force. James O'Connor, once again, demonstrates that he is America's most original social theorist." --Mike Davis, author of *City of Quartz* and *Ecology of Fear*

"The good news is that the environmental and socialist movements are beginning to create a dialogue, which can immeasurably strengthen both. James O'Connor has been one of the country's leading intellectual figures in that dialogue, and his new book shows, in a compelling, sophisticated way, how both movements must come together." --Donald Worster, Hall Distinguished Professor of American History, University of Kansas

"Provocative....The book should help dispel suspicions that the post-1989 green turn of many socialists was opportunistic. Recommended for graduate students and faculty."--Choice
(*Choice* 1997-12-21)

"College-level students of Marxist theory will welcome a coverage which links business and political policies with issues of environmental and social change. Complex and revealing, backed with many source material facts."--The Midwest Book Review
(*The Midwest Book Review* 1997-12-21)

About the Author

James O'Connor, PhD, is co-founder and Editor-in-Chief of *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism: A Journal of Socialist Ecology*, and Director of the Center for Political Ecology in Santa Cruz, California. He is retired from teaching sociology, economics, and environmental studies at the University of California, Santa Cruz.

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Introduction I. History and Nature Introduction to Part I 1. Culture, Nature, and the Materialist Conception of History 2. What Is Environmental History? Why Environmental History? 3. Three Ways to Look at the Ecological History and Cultural Landscapes of Monterey Bay 4. The Nature of Construction and the Construction of Nature at Fall Creek, Felton, California, 1860 1990: A Script 5. The Sales of Two Cities: Chicago and Los Angeles II. Capitalism and Nature Introduction to Part II 6. Some Observations on

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