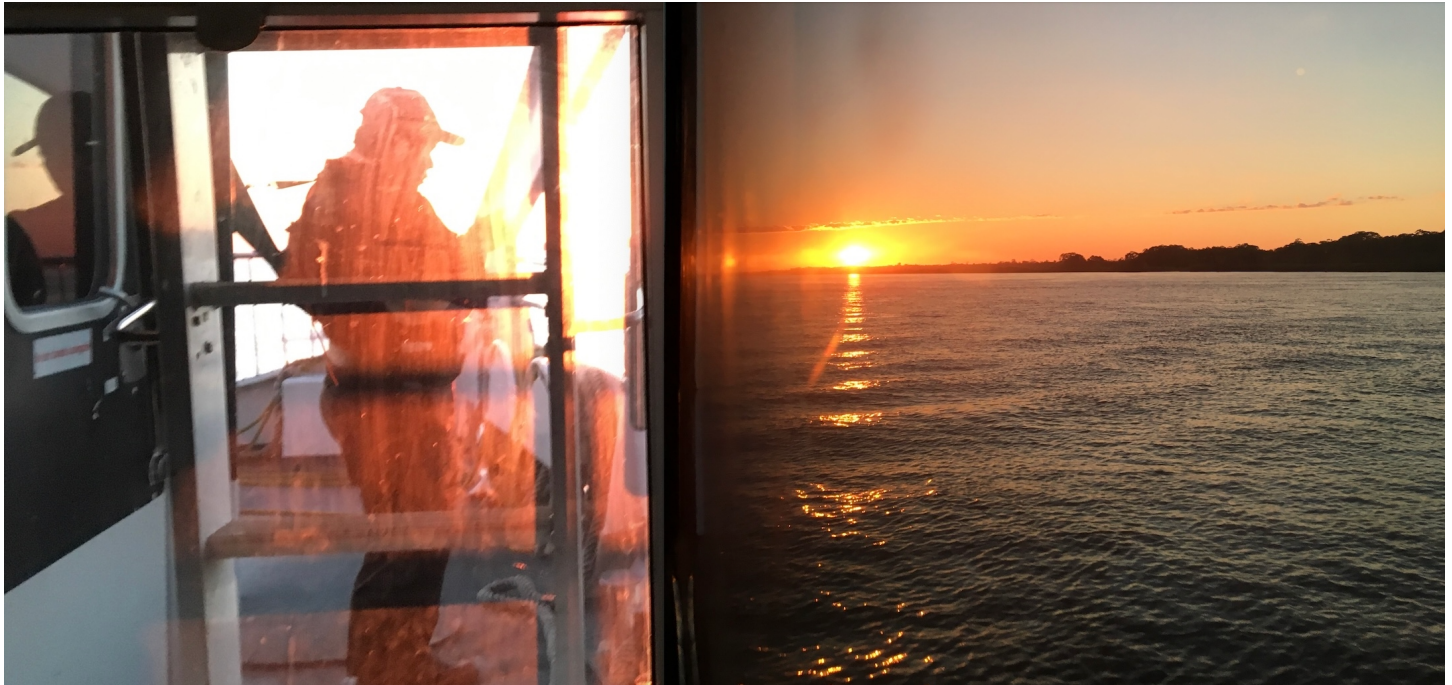


s o u r c e s o f l a w



i n a m a z o n i a

How do questions of law become entangled with rivers and the places rivers roam? From where do legal phenomena gather strength and to what extent do material terrains themselves have a say? Given that matters of law are always plural and, therefore, beyond the ultimate control of any one power, how are such matters decided and how would one know?

This seminar examines relations of jurisprudence as they meet riverine environments: here with a strict geographic focus on "Amazonia," above all, its western and northern margins. Rivers, in their precipitous drop from the heights of the Andes, move with and within landscapes of the Amazon. In so doing, they bring to the fore historical struggles for ground: including what churns beneath the surface, no less than what hovers above. In so doing, rivers reiterate a general problem of relations: a certain something that always crops up in between. How does any relation—material, social, temporal, ecological—become a *legal* relation, if not through a vitality that binds, obliges, entitles, cuts and stretches. To ask where that supplementary charge comes from, and therein about the sources of law in any particular Amazonian place, requires straddling more than one register of critical inquiry.

In this class we will delve into select historical and ethnographic records, drawing as well on works of cinema and literary fiction. Moving slowly, we will look and listen for the rhythms, events and reliefs that run through empirical worlds. We will take great care as well to familiarize ourselves with relevant legal concepts and practices, while paying attention to how they combine language, force, and technique.

In Amazonia who can be a native and who a settler? Who can assert ties to land and of what kinds? Who can represent interests acting from afar? And who can extract wealth and advantage, sometimes without giving nearly enough in return? How do legal claims *relate* specifically to Amazonian terrains? To their supposed pristine origins, to their defilements and ruin, to their present-day defense?

Perhaps all law springs from seizure. And if so, then rivers are a good place to begin.

Instructor: **R i c h a r d K e r n a g h a n**

W | Periods 5-7
(11:45 AM - 2:45 PM)
MAT 0005