Syllabus: Planet in Peril - Environmental Issues and Society

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Course Description
Sociology points us beyond scientific issues to the social roots of contemporary ecological problems, as well as to the justice questions this circumstance entails. This course provides the foundation for an informed, critical approach to contemporary environmental issues in society. We cover the distinctive dimensions of modern ecological challenges, the role of economic systems, the history of the U.S. environmental movement, environmental justice, the role of culture and religion in shaping a society's environmental ethic, environmental issues abroad and in the global context, and the relationship between democracy and ecology. Throughout students learn a cross-section of sociological modes of analysis.

Grading
Participation and Attendance (15%), Journal Entries (35%), Exam (15%), Media Project (20%), Environmental Service Program (%15)

Readings

Unit I. Social Theory and Environmental Change
*note all texts with a star will be on course reserve
Week 1, 9/1: Messages of the Climate Crisis
Intro to Planet in Peril, Science and the Climate Crisis, Social Constructionist Perspective
Maathai p.1-52; Pollan p. 1-15; *Hannigan p. 94-107

Week 2, 9/8: Macro-social Theory and Ecological Decline
The Risk Society, Ecological Modernization and the Treadmill of Production
Case Study: The US Food System

Week 3, 9/15: Environmental “Accounting”
The New Ecological Paradigm, Ecological Footprint, IPAT
Journal I due. Monday, September 15th
September 19th class cancelled
*Dunlap (2002), Paradigms, Theories and Environmental Sociology

Unit II. Green Media and Consumerism pt. 1
Week 4, 9/22: Greenwashing and Deconstructing Green Messages.
Environmental Discourse & Ecolinguistics
Friday, September 26th. Exam Review
*Hannigan p.36-62; Pollan p.78-101; Maathai p.97-138
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Unit III. The Death of Environmentalism Debate
Week 5, 9/29: The Death of Environmentalism Debate
Monday, September 29th. EXAM
The Soul of Environmentalism http://www.rprogress.org/soul/soul.pdf

Week 6, 10/6: Introduction to Environmental Justice
Journal II due. Monday, October 6th
All readings can be found online at: http://www.grist.org/news/maindish/2005/01/13/doe-intro/

Week 7, 10/13: Framing and Social Movements
No Class on Monday, October 13th

Week 8, 10/20: Green Collar Jobs
Van Jones, The Unbearable Whiteness of Green; www.greenforall.org
Class Cancelled October 24th

Unit IV. Green Media and Consumerism pt. 2
Week 9, 10/27: Bottled Water
Case Study: Water in Global Perspective
Journal III due. Monday, October 27th. Introduce media projects
Barlow, p.1-101

Unit V. Environmental Education and Activism
Week 10, 11/3: Environmental Education
Monday, November, 3rd: Media Project Proposal Due
Barlow, p. 102-141

Week 11, 11/10: Radical Environmentalism
Ecofeminism, Hip Hop Ecology

Week 12, 11/17: Seeds of Change
Journal IV due. Monday, November 17th
Maathai, p.139-205

Week 13, 11/24: Canopy of Hope
Monday, November 24th. Draft Media Project due
Barlow, p.142-176; Maathai, p.206-291
November Break

Week 14, 12/01: Broadcasting your Message
Journal V due. Wednesday, December 3rd
Pollan, p.102-205;
Journal Assignments

Title: Each entry should have a title and date

Theme: The pieces of the journal entry should cohere around a central theme that is related to the topics covered in class. The theme should have a clear angle and argument with regards to the topics from class (example: state if you agree or disagree with a certain topic or author)

Response to Readings: In each entry you will be responsible for transcribing 3 quotes from the readings we have done and note the source and page number. The quotes should be related to the theme you chose for your entry. Each quote must be accompanied by a 3-4 paragraph explanation touching the following points.
- What is this quote describing (in your own words)?
- Why was this quote chosen and what did you learn from it?
- How do the quotes relate to someone desiring to live sustainably in today’s world?

Incorporation of Artistic Media: At least 2 excerpts from creative expression (such as song lyrics, or quotes from movies) should be used to further substantiate your theme and the quotes from the readings you selected. These can be the art forms used in class or from outside sources.

Outside Material: At least one outside source should be used in the journal entry to support or illustrate your claims. These can be web-pages, articles, commercials, TV episodes, etc. Include a brief discussion (1-2 paragraphs) of how this material fits with your theme.

Creativity: Entries should be given a unique aesthetic and may include a range of artistic forms such as collage, lettering, graphic design done on a computer, clippings from magazines/newspapers

Reflection: A brief synopsis should be included at the end of the entry addressing the following points.
- A re-iteration of the theme of your entry
- What inspired you to use this theme
- How can this entry be used to teach others about environmental issues and society

Environmental Service Program

You will be required to attend 3 on-campus and 2 off-campus events related to environmental issues during this semester. On-campus events can include lectures, film screenings, rallies, student club events, and may also include other time-invested actions such as interviewing a faculty member who works/researches environmental issues.
Off-campus events include attending conferences, visiting environmental non-profits, festivals, and meetings. Ideas for events should be approved by the professor in case of any question.

Reflection: Each action will require a 1-2 page reflection including the following points:
- A brief description of the event
- A discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the event
- An outline of how the event related to themes from the class (or how themes from the event could be brought into the class)