

Syllabus: Planet in Peril - Environmental Issues and Society

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Course Description (Spring 2009)

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

Maathai, W. (2006) *Unbowed: A Memoir*
Pollan, M. (2008) *In Defense of Food: An Eater's Manifesto*
Lohan, T. (ed). (2008) *Water Consciousness*
Jones, V. (2008) *The Green Collar Economy: How One Solution Can Fix Our Two Biggest Problems*
Hannigan, J. (2006). *Environmental Sociology: A Social Constructionist Perspective* (2nd ed.): Routledge.

Unit I. Social Theory and Environmental Change *note all texts with a star will be on Blackboard

Week 1, 1/15: 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, 1/20: Macro-social Theory and Ecological Decline Case Study: The US Food System
The Risk Society, Ecological Modernization and the Treadmill of Production
*Schlosberg & Rinfret (2008) *EM American Style*

1/22: Environmental "Accounting"

The New Ecological Paradigm, Ecological Footprint, IPAT
*Dunlap (2002), *Paradigms, Theories and Environmental Sociology*
<http://www.footprintnetwork.org/>; *Chertow (2001) *The IPAT Equation*

Week 3, 1/27:

1/27: VIDEO - King Corn (www.kingcorn.net)

Journal I due. Thursday, January 29th

Maathai p.53-138; Pollan p.19-101,

Unit II. Green Media and Consumerism pt. 1

Week 4, 2/3: *Greenwashing and Deconstructing Green Messages.*

Environmental Discourse & Ecolinguistics

Thursday, February 5th Exam Review

*Mulhausler & Peace (2003) *Environmental Discourse*; Hannigan p.36-62;

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Unit III. The Death of Environmentalism Debate

Week 5, 2/10: Introduction to Environmental Justice and Framing Analysis

Tuesday, February 9th. EXAM

**Taylor (2000) The Rise of the Environmental Justice Paradigm*

The Death of Environmentalism; Jones p.1-33

Week 6, 2/17: The Death of Environmentalism Debate

Journal II due. Thursday, February 19th

The Soul of Environmentalism <http://www.rprogress.org/soul/soul.pdf>

All readings can be found online at: <http://www.grist.org/news/maindish/2005/01/13/doe-intro/>

Week 7, 2/24: Green Collar Jobs, Van Jones and Majora Carter

VIDEOS: Van Jones- Bioneers 2007 keynote address; 2008 discussion with Simran Sethi
Jones p.34-113. **Introduce Media Projects**

Week 8, 3/2 SPRING BREAK

Unit IV. Green Media and Consumerism pt. 2

Week 9, 3/10: Case Study: Bottled Water & the World Water Wars

VIDEO - Blue Gold: World Water Wars, directed by Sam Bozzo

Journal III due. Thursday, March 12th; Water Consciousness: assorted essays

Week 10, 3/17: Bottled Water and Advertising,

Water Consciousness: assorted essays

Tuesday, March 19th Media Project Proposal Due

Unit V. Environmental Education and Activism

Week 11, 3/24: Bottled Knowledge & Ecological Literacy

Hip Hop Ecology (Cermak); Water Consciousness: assorted essays

Maathai, p.139-229

Week 12, 3/31: Civic and Environmental Education

Journal IV due. Thursday, April 2nd

VIDEO: Taking Root- The Vision of Wangari Maathai

Maathai, p.230-307

Week 13, 4/7: Jack Herer and the Hemp Debate

NO CLASS – Thursday April 9th

Week 14, 4/14: Seeds of Change, Canopy of Hope

Tuesday, April 16th. Draft Media Project due

Jones p.114-189

Week 15, 4/21: Broadcasting your Message

Pollan, p.102-205, Jones p.189-197

Final Media Showing: May 5th, 9AM-12PM

Journal V due.

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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 events 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)