Syllabus: Planet in Peril - Environmental Issues and Society

Michael Cermak e-mail: cermakm@bc.edu Office hours: Th 1:30-3pm McGuinn410D

Course Description (Spring 2010)
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 Blackboard
Readings should be completed before class of the specified week
Week 1, 1/19: 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
Case Study: The US Food System
The Risk Society, Ecological Modernization and the Treadmill of Production
*Schlosberg & Rinfret (2008) EM American Style

Week 2, 1/26: Macro-social Theory and Ecological Decline
Environmental “Accounting”
The New Ecological Paradigm, Ecological Footprint, IPAT
*Dunlap (2002), Paradigms, Theories and Environmental Sociology
http://www.footprintnetwork.org/;

Week 3, 2/2: VIDEO - King Corn (www.kingcorn.net)
Journal I due. Friday, February 5th
Maathai p.53-138; Pollan p.19-101

Unit II. Green Media and Consumerism pt. 1
Week 4, 2/9: Greenwashing and Deconstructing Green Messages.
Environmental Discourse & Ecolinguistics
Thursday, February 11th Exam Review
Unit III. The Death of Environmentalism Debate
Week 5, 2/16: Introduction to Environmental Justice and Framing Analysis
Tuesday, February 16th. EXAM
The Death of Environmentalism; Jones p.1-33

Week 6, 2/23: The Death of Environmentalism Debate
Journal II due. Friday, February 26th
*Death of Environmentalism Reader

Week 7, SPRING BREAK

Week 8, 3/9: Green Collar Jobs, Van Jones and Majora Carter
VIDEOS: Van Jones- Bioneers 2007 keynote address; Van Jones on Colbert Report
Jones p.34-113. Introduce Media Projects

Unit IV. Green Media and Consumerism pt. 2
Week 9, 3/16: Case Study: Bottled Water & the World Water Wars
VIDEO - Blue Gold: World Water Wars, directed by Sam Bozzo
Journal III due. Friday, March 19th; Water Consciousness: assorted essays

Week 10, 3/23: Bottled Water and Advertising,
Water Consciousness: assorted essays
Friday, March 26th  Media Project Proposal Due

Unit V. Environmental Education and Activism
Week 11, 3/30: Bottled Knowledge & Ecological Literacy
Hip Hop Ecology (Cermak); Water Consciousness: assorted essays
Maathai, p.139-229
APRIL 1st EASTER BREAK

Week 12, 4/6: Civic and Environmental Education
Journal IV due. Friday, April 9th
VIDEO: Taking Root- The Vision of Wangari Maathai
Maathai, p.230-307

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

Week 14, 4/20: Seeds of Change, Canopy of Hope
Friday, April 23rd. Draft Media Project due
Jones p.114-197, Pollan, p.102-205

Week 15, 4/27: Media and Environmental Change (SELECTED VIDEOS)

Final Media Showing: Thursday May 13th 9AM; Journal V due.
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Journal Assignments

Title: Each entry should have a title and date

Theme/Argument: The pieces of the journal entry should cohere around a central theme that is related to the assignment question. The theme should have a clear angle and argument (example: state if you agree or disagree with the question). The more

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/argument 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 does this quote support your argument?

Incorporation of Artistic Media: At least two 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 personal anecdote, web-pages, articles, commercials, TV episodes, etc. Include a brief discussion 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, or clippings from magazines/newspapers. These elements should be integrated with the entry not just decorative.

Reflection: A synopsis should be included at the end of the entry addressing the following points. This part is separate from the main entry.
• 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 are 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)