Boston College

SC 349: Select Topics in Environmental Studies

Spring Semester 2010

Dr. Brian J. Gareau

LOCATION: Carney 102
Wednesdays 4:30-6:50

OFFICE: McGuinn, Room 412
OFFICE PHONE: (617) 552-8148
OFFICE HOURS: Tuesdays 3-5pm and by appointment
EMAIL: gareau@bc.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course explores how ecology, technology, politics, economics, and culture intersect. By analyzing key contemporary environmental debates, students develop skills necessary for investigating any sophisticated social issue. Topics we cover: the environmental movement; the sustainable development debate (the tension between environmental protection and the plight of developing nations); capitalism and technology (friends or foes of the environment?); global warming (where science, economics, and politics collide). We employ a range of materials, including participant accounts, media coverage, movies, and sociological analyses. This course can build on but does not require prior coursework in environmental studies or environmental sociology.

For this iteration of the course, we will focus centrally on one over-arching concept: The Domination of Nature. Where did this idea come from? How has it affected societies since the Industrial Revolution? How did the environmental movement help reveal the problems with viewing “nature” as something to be dominated? What have been some of the cultural reverberations of the domination of nature? We will explore these questions through reading some foundational texts in environmental studies, as well as others that have been influenced by, and have influenced, societal responses to the domination of nature.

There are several required texts in this course (available at the BC Bookstore):

1. Leiss, The Domination of Nature
2. Dickerson, Entas, Elves, and Eriador: The Environmental Vision of J.R.R. Tolkien
3. Tolkien, Fellowship of the Ring
4. Merchant, Death of Nature
5. Lewis, Abolition of Man
6. Carson, Silent Spring
7. Guthman, Agrarian Dreams
ATTENDANCE/PARTICIPATION:
SC 349 is a seminar-format class that combines lecture with group discussion. Students’ final grade will depend, in part, on the quality of their participation in class discussion. Obviously, adequate participation requires regular attendance. You must be respectful of other’s viewpoints, experiences, orientation, etc. when discussing the concepts in this class. Debate is inevitable and useful, but be respectful. If you are not, you will be asked to withdraw from the course.
You must come prepared with a one to two-page write-up on the day's reading every class. General Outline:
1. In the first paragraph, provide the general thread of argument, ideas, concepts, and/or themes that run through the readings for the week.
2. In the body of the paper, discuss in detail some of the key concepts and arguments. Discuss the readings in an integrative way; put the current readings in conversation with previous readings. Dig deep into the readings; do not provide a superficial summary. Rather, engage with the reading by giving a critical review of what you choose to focus on.
3. Then, give your view on some of these concepts. Which concepts/arguments make sense to you? Which do not? Use readings from previous weeks to support your claims.
4. This assignment will take some time to master, but it is a valuable skill, so work hard at it.
5. Readings should be studied before the class for which they are assigned. These assignments also count for your attendance, and you may not turn them in late or in absentia from the class. These write-ups will make valuable notes for your exams and potential future work on environmental issues.

ASSESSMENT
All grades in SC 349 are based on the percentages shown in Table 1.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES AND ASSOCIATED GRADES.
Students are responsible for the work listed in Table 2.

Table 1. Grade Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>% Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>78-80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73-78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67-70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>63-67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>60-63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>&lt;60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Student Work & Percentage of Grade Earned

- Week 1 Introductions January 20, 2010
- Week 2 January 27, 2010
  - Birth of Capitalism
    - Ecological Implications of the transition to Capitalism
    - Francis Bacon
  - Read: Leiss, Part One
• Week 3 February 3, 2010  
    ▪ Read: Leiss, Part Two  
• Week 4 (February 10, 2010)  
  o Eco-Feminism: Feminist Reactions to the Domination of Nature  
    ▪ Read: Carolyn Merchant, *Death of Nature*, Chs 1-6  
• Week 5 (February 17, 2010)  
  ▪ Read: Merchant, *Death of Nature*, Chs 7-12  
• Week 6 (February 24, 2010)  
  o Morality in Science  
    ▪ Read: C.S. Lewis, *Abolition of Man*  
• Week 7 (March 3, 2010)  
  o Spring Break- Bring Tolkien with you!!!  
• Week 8 (March 10 2010)  
  o Cultural Reactions  
    ▪ Post WWI Cultural Insights  
      ▪ Read: Tolkien *The Fellowship of the Ring*  
        o Book ONE  
        o Be Sure to read the Prologue (Concerning Hobbits)  
      ▪ Andrew Light’s Chapter in LoTR and Philosophy  
  ▪ *** Midterm Exam Handed out today  
• Week 9 (March 17 2010)  
  o Read: Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*  
    ▪ Read Book TWO  
• Week 10 (March 24, 2010)  
  o Read: Selections from: Ents, Elves, and Eriador: The Environmental Vision of J.R.R. Tolkien “Anyone who ever thrilled to the novel charm of the Shire will want to read this important and lovely book.” -- *Bill McKibben, Scholar in Residence in Environmental Studies, Middlebury College, author of The End of Nature*  
    ▪ Read Chs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10  
• Week 11 (March 31, 2010)  
  o Easter Week Class TBD  
• Week 12 (April 7, 2010)  
  o Origins of Environmental Sociology and Environmental Justice  
    ▪ Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring*  
    ▪ Read: Chs 1-9  
• Week 13 (April 14, 2010)  
  o *** No Class- I am presenting at an academic conference (AAG)  
• Week 14 (April 21, 2010)  
  o 1970s Environmental Sociology  
    ▪ Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring*  
    ▪ Read: Chs 10-17  
• Week 15 (April 28, 2010)  
  o Back to the Shire? Barriers and Bridges to Solutions in Sustainable Agriculture  
    ▪ Read: Guthman, *Agrarian Dreams*  
    ▪ Read Chs 1,2,3,6,7,8  
  ▪ *** Final Exam Handed Out today  
• Week 16 (May 5, 2010)  
  o Back to the Shire?, continued  
    ▪ Read: Kloppenberg or Pollan TBD  
  o Course Summary  
• May 7-10 Study Days  
• May 11-18 Term Examinations