Boston College

Society & Environmental Transformations

SC 031

Spring Semester 2011

Professor Brian J. Gareau

LOCATION: 026 Devlin
Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays 2:00pm

OFFICE: McGuinn, Room 412

OFFICE PHONE: (617) 552-8148

OFFICE HOURS: Fridays 3-4pm and by appointment

EMAIL: gareau@bc.edu

Teaching Assistants: Tom Laidley (tom.laidley@gmail.com),

Office hours: Mon 3-4pm, McGuinn 410A

Alex Hernandez (hernanap@bc.edu)

Office hours: Mon 12:15-1:45pm, McGuinn 410A

(TAs will hold 1 hour of office hours/week and will be available by appointment.)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Where do contemporary environmental problems come from? Why is it so hard to resolve serious global environmental issues? Are environmental problems really social problems? This course will compel students to explore these questions, to devise answers to them, and to learn how to understand environmental problems with sociological analytical methods. Students will explore the historical origins of the contemporary world, revisit the social and environmental changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution, the World Wars, and the liberalization of capitalism. We also will explore several case studies of contemporary social-environmental problems, and then, through further case studies and first-hand research, we will ponder how globalization might be the start of a new environmental transformation for society.
REQUIREMENTS

Written requirements include a weekly write-up response, due every Friday in class (20%), an in-class midterm examination (20%), a final examination (30%), a research paper (20%), and participation in Friday sections and class discussion (10%).

* Course readings will be posted on the course’s Blackboard Vista website.

REQUIRED TEXTS (AVAILABLE AT THE BOSTON COLLEGE BOOKSTORE):


*All the books will be held on Reserve at the O’Neill Library. Books may be taken out for 2 hours in the library and can be renewed if no one is waiting

ELECTRONIC READINGS:
Course readings marked “Vista” in the syllabus are available to view online, download, and print on Blackboard Vista. Students are automatically given access to the Blackboard Vista course site based on the course roster. Use your BC username and password to access the site.

BLACKBOARD VISTA CHAT:
Periodically, I might display the course Blackboard Vista Chat page on the projector screen. This will allow students to ask questions, make comments, and to respond to questions/comments during lecture. We might occasionally review the comments during class discussion. To get started: https://cms.bc.edu

ATTENDANCE/PARTICIPATION:
SC 031 is a lecture-format class that combines lecture with group discussion and Friday small-group activities. 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.
**Academic Integrity and Plagiarism Policy**
Cheating and plagiarism are taken extremely seriously. I have appended the University’s academic integrity statement to this syllabus. You are responsible for knowing what that policy is, and how cheating and plagiarism are defined.

**Weekly Write-up / Reading Response**
On Fridays, you must come prepared with a 2-page write-up on the week’s readings. Readings should be studied before the week for which they are assigned. You may not turn in write-ups late or in absentia from the class. These write-ups will make valuable notes for your exams and potential future work on social/environmental issues.

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. Please include a References section at the end of the write-up with references used in your piece.

**Research Paper**
In this course you will complete an 10-12-page research paper on a topic of your choice related to themes and using theoretical tools from the course. Beginning Week Ten, you will start to work on:
1) Thinking about a topic that interests you (climate change and governance; glacier melting and the human impacts; hurricane frequency and social justice; GMOs and water shortages, etc.). Then you will gradually (with feedback from your TAs and/or me):
2) Select a specific topic to investigate,
3) Revise the research topic (usually the proposed research area is initially too broad given the shortage of time to complete the project,
4) Write a literature review, 2-3 pages
5) Write a 4-5 page section discussing links between specific topic and social theory/broader social/environmental problems.
6) Complete a final draft, which concludes by providing a 3-4-page discussion of solutions to your research problem based on course material.
7) Your final draft must include a list of references cited in the research paper.

**Research Presentation**
A select few who produce outstanding research papers will be asked to present their work to the class during Week 15. ***These students will be given extra credit for the course***
ASSESSMENT

- All grades in SC 031 are based on the percentages shown in Table 1.
- Students are responsible for the work listed in Table 2.

**Table 2. Student Work & Percentage of Grade Earned**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Midterm Exam</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weekly Write-ups</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Paper</td>
<td>20%</td>
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</tbody>
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**Table 1. Grade Scale**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>% Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-100</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-93</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
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Sociology 031 and the Core Curriculum: Sociology 031 is a part of the Core Curriculum in Sociology. As such it is designed to address a range of intellectual issues, using a variety of methodologies, and to engage students in particular ways. These are discussed below:

1. **The long-standing questions** Sociology, and intellectual inquiry more generally, have long been preoccupied with a set of big questions. These include the debate over biological versus sociological causality, the nature of human agency, what is social justice and how can it be realized, and what constitutes progress? This course addresses these, and other similar issues, through the lens of societies’ relationship to the so-called ‘natural world.’ For example, we will be considering the extent and ways in which ecological degradation is caused by human actions, and particularly whether outcomes have been intentional. We will explore various explanations for major ecological trends, such as global climate change. We will look at the effects of globalization through a number of lenses, including global justice, politics, and effects on the environment. We will examine the ways in which ecological resources are appropriated, used and degraded. Throughout, large themes explaining societies’ relationship to the so-called natural world will be emphasized.

2. **Cultural diversity** This course takes a broad (macro-sociological) and culturally diverse perspective, using examples from many parts of the world (Europe, Central America, Southeast Asia, etc.). For example, we will look at the history of development in Central America and Europe, how Western conceptions of conservation have been colored by racial and geographic stereotyping, and so on. Thus, this is a course with a global lens.

3. **Historical perspective** The course uses a macro-historical perspective in order to understand our past, but also why the present is organized the way it is. Thus, the course draws quite deliberately from historical sociology, environmental history, and global sociology.

4. **Methodology** Students are exposed to a variety of methodological approaches and tools. We will be reading standard historical and social science articles and books, some activist writing, and journalistic, firsthand accounts. By looking at a variety of points of view we are able to assess the relative strengths and weaknesses of various methods of analysis.

5. **Writing component** The course requires not only reading, but also considerable writing. In addition to a mid-term and a final examination, students write weekly essays that incorporate weekly reading assignments, and complete a 10-12-page research paper.

6. **Creating a personal philosophy** While we are all global citizens, we do not always think consciously about what that means. How do our work and leisure decisions affect ecosystems? How does our participation in a global economy impact the earth? What is our responsibility, regardless of what job we might one day have, demand of us? A major objective of this course is to get us to think critically and consciously about human impacts on the planet. In addition, the course is designed to get us to analyze how we conceptualize the planet and societies’ relationship to it. In this spirit, through a research paper, you will begin to explore a major environmental issue and propose how it might be resolved.
ORGANIZATION OF THE CLASS BY WEEK

WEEK ONE: Wed. 19 and Fri. 21 January
Theme: Course overview. Syllabus, readings, assignments, and expectations.
The scale and breadth of global environmental problems.

Read:
- (Vista) Speth, G. The Bridge at the Edge of the World
  - Chapter 1 - Looking into the Abyss
  - Chapter 2 - Modern Capitalism: Out of Control
- (Vista) Foster, J.B. Ecology Against Capitalism
  - Chapter 5 - “Let them Eat Pollution”
  - Chapter 6 - The Scale of Our Ecological Crisis

WEEK TWO: Mon. 24, Wed. 26, Fri. 28 January

Read:
  Chapters 1, 2
**Week Three: Mon. 31 January, Wed. 2, Fri. 4 February**

Theme: The Long View of Social/Environmental Transformations and the Origins of the Modern World

Read:

- Ecological Conditions before the Industrial Revolution, Chapter 2 In Foster J. B. *The Vulnerable Planet*
- (Vista) Chapter 1 System Crisis in Chew, S. *The Reurring Dark Ages*
- (Vista) Thompson, W.R. Climate, Water, and Political-Economic Crises in Ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt. Chapter 11, In Hormborg and Crumley (eds) *The World System and the Earth System: Global Socioenvironmental Change and Sustainability Since the Neolithic*
- (Vista) Diamond, J. The Worst Mistake in the History of the Human Race

Friday- Film *Dark Ages*

**Week Four: Mon. 7, Wed. 9, Fri. 11 February**

Theme: Early Capitalism: Colonialism, Imperialism, and Ecological Integration into the Global Economy

Read:

- (Vista) Gareau, B.J. Definitions of “Ecological Imperialism” and “Domination of Nature”
- Foster, Chapters 4 and 5 *The Vulnerable Planet*
- (Vista) Cronon, W. Chapter 8 “That Wilderness Should Turn A Mart.” In *Changes in the Land*
- (Vista) Mann, M. Chapter 1, “A View from Above,” and Chapter 6, “Cotton and Maize” In *1491*
- (Vista) Bernstein, H. Colonialism (starts at Chapter 11, p. 241).

**Week Five: Mon. 14, Wed. 16, Fri. 18 February**

Theme: A New Ethic or a Great Transformation?: The Industrial Revolution and the emergence of contemporary social/environmental issues.

Read:

- Foster, *Vulnerable Planet*, Chapter 3
- (Vista) Hobsbawm. *Industry and Empire*, Chapters 1 and 2
- (Vista) Polanyi- Great Transformation, Chapter 6
- (Vista) Engels- The Great Towns, *In Condition of the Working Class in England*
WEEK SIX: MON. 21, WED. 23, FRI. 25 FEBRUARY


*** Note! Next Week: Friday 4 March In-class Midterm Exam ***

Read:

- (Vista) McMichael, P. – Bretton Woods Institutions- From Development to Globalization/Neoliberalism.
- (Vista) Gareau, B.J. Definitions of “Montreal Protocol,” “Green Neoliberalism,” and “Chlorofluorocarbons”
- (Vista) Roberts, J.T. Trouble in Paradise – NAFTA Chapter
- (Vista) Jackson, J. The Globalizers, Chapter 8, Making Maquiladoras

Recommended:

- (Vista) Stiglitz, J. Chapter 4, The East Asia Financial Crisis In Globalization and its Discontents
- (Vista) Gibson and Tsakalotos, The International Debt Crisis

Friday- Film Maquilapolis

WEEK SEVEN: MON. 18 FEBRUARY, WED. 2, 4 FRI. MARCH

Theme: Case Study: Honduras’s Socio-Environmental History from Colonialism to Globalization

*** Friday 4 March In-class Midterm Exam ***

Read:


Or


http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/ahr/106.1/ah000049.html

And


Or


And

- (Vista) Cronon, W. “The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature.”
**Week Eight: 7-11 March Spring Break- No Classes**

**Week Nine: Mon. 21, Wed. 23, Fri. 25 March**

Theme: Case Study The Impact of Transnational Corporations- Is Walmart Good for America?

Read:

- (Vista) Fishman, C. Chapters 6 and 7 in the Wal-Mart Effect
- (Vista) Barrionuevo, A. Virus Kills Salmon and Indicts Its Fishing Methods
- (Vista) Hudson and Watcharasakwet, The New Wal-Mart Effect: Cleaner Thai Shrimp Farms
- (Vista) Reich, R. Don’t Blame Wal-Mart
- (Vista) Tierney, R. Shopping for a Nobel
- (Vista) Cohen & Kennedy- Chapter 7, in Global Sociology

Monday or Friday Film- Excerpts from The Cow, or, Is Wal-Mart Good for America?

**Week Ten: 28 Mon., 30 Wed. March, Fri. 1 April**

Theme: Case Study Oil problems- Petro Wars, Oil disasters, and the need for another way to improve society/nature relations

*** **Friday 1 April** Discuss Research Papers that are due 4 May.

Prepare research topic for next Friday***

Read:

- Freudenburg and Gramling 2010. Blowout in the Gulf
**WEEK ELEVEN: MON. 4, WED. 6, FRI. 8 APRIL**

*Theme: Case Study: Climate Change and the Need for a Change in Attitude, a Social Transformation*

*** **FRIDAY 8 APRIL** Small groups: Hand in research topics. Prepare 2-3-page literature review on research topic for next Friday. ***

Read:

- Orr, D. *Down to the Wire*


- (Vista) "A Convenient Untruth," by Michael Shnayerson, May 2007 *Vanity Fair*


*** Largely a Discussion-based week ***

**WEEK TWELVE: MON. 11, WED., 13, FRI. 15 APRIL**


*** **FRIDAY 15 APRIL** 1) TAs hand back research topics; 2) Small groups: 1) Hand in 2-3 page literature review. 2) Discuss literature review and how to link research topic to social theories and/or broader patterns of social change ***

Read:

- McDonough and Braungart, *Cradle to Cradle*

- (Vista) Wallace, D. Sustainable Industrialization, Chapter 8 (Starts of page 83)

**WEEK THIRTEEN: MON. 18 APRIL PATRIOT'S DAY  NO class**

**WED. 20 APRIL**

*Theme: Alternatives to the Throwaway Society?*

FILM: Waste = Food

*** Small groups: 1) TAs hand back literature review drafts with comments on how to link research topic to social theories and/or broader patterns of social change. ***

**[NOW WOULD BE A GOOD TIME TO SET UP A MEETING WITH A TA!!]***

**FRI. 22 APRIL GOOD FRIDAY  NO class**
**Week 14: Mon. 25 April - Easter Monday - No class**

**Wed. 27, Fri. 29 April**

Theme: Solutions? Where is the Next Great Transformation? Signs of hope from Social Justice

*** Friday 29 April *** Small groups: Hand in: 1) 2-3-page revised literature review and 2) 4-page draft section discussing links between specific topic and social theory/broader social/environmental problems. 3) Discuss some solutions to your problems (will be 3-4 pp) based on course material ***

Read:

- Robert Bullard (ed) *Growing Smarter: Achieving Livable Communities, Environmental Justice, and Regional Equity*. Choose 5-6 chapters to read and explore in your weekly write-up (choose chapters that fit best with your research paper).
- (Vista) Hawken et al. *Natural Capitalism*, Chapters 14 and 15

Wed or Fri Film- Lessons from Curitiba

[NOW WOULD BE ANOTHER GOOD TIME TO SET UP A MEETING WITH A TA!!!]

**Week 15: 2, 4 May**

Theme: Research Presentations and Class Wrap-up

4 May - Research Paper Presentations

*** Research Papers due at beginning of class!!! ***

6 May – Beginning of Student study days—No class

*** Final Exam will take place at the time and day designated by Boston College ***
Boston College Academic Integrity Policy and Procedures (excerpted)
Copied from: http://www.bc.edu/integrity

The pursuit of knowledge can proceed only when scholars take responsibility and receive credit for their work. Recognition of individual contributions to knowledge and of the intellectual property of others builds trust within the university and encourages the sharing of ideas that is essential to scholarship. Similarly, the educational process requires that individuals present their own ideas and insights for evaluation, critique, and eventual reformulation. Presentation of others’ work as one’s own is not only intellectual dishonesty, but also undermines the educational process.

Standards: Academic integrity is violated by any dishonest act which is committed in an academic context including, but not restricted to the following:

Cheating is the fraudulent or dishonest presentation of work. Cheating includes but is not limited to:
* the use or attempted use of unauthorized aids in examinations or other academic exercises submitted for evaluation;
* fabrication, falsification, or misrepresentation of data, results, sources for papers or reports, or in clinical practice, as in reporting experiments, measurements, statistical analyses, tests, or other studies never performed; manipulating or altering data or other manifestations of research to achieve a desired result; selective reporting, including the deliberate suppression of conflicting or unwanted data;
* falsification of papers, official records, or reports;
* copying from another student’s work;
* actions that destroy or alter the work of another student;
* unauthorized cooperation in completing assignments or during an examination;
* the use of purchased essays or term papers, or of purchased preparatory research for such papers;
* submission of the same written work in more than one course without prior written approval from the instructors involved;
* dishonesty in requests for make-up exams, for extensions of deadlines for submitting papers, and in any other matter relating to a course.

Plagiarism is the deliberate act of taking the words, ideas, data, illustrations, or statements of another person or source, and presenting them as one’s own. Each student is responsible for learning and using proper methods of paraphrasing and footnoting, quotation, and other forms of citation, to ensure that the original author, speaker, illustrator, or source of the material used is clearly acknowledged. Other breaches of academic integrity include:
* the misrepresentation of one’s own or another’s identity for academic purposes;
* the misrepresentation of material facts or circumstances in relation to examinations, papers, or other evaluative activities;
* the sale of papers, essays, or research for fraudulent use;
* the alteration or falsification of official University records;
* the unauthorized use of University academic facilities or equipment, including computer accounts and files;
* the unauthorized recording, sale, purchase, or use of academic lectures, academic computer software, or other instructional materials;
* the expropriation or abuse of ideas and preliminary data obtained during the process of editorial or peer review of work submitted to journals, or in proposals for funding by agency panels or by internal University committees;
* the expropriation and/or inappropriate dissemination of personally-identifying human subject data;
* the unauthorized removal, mutilation, or deliberate concealment of materials in University libraries, media, or academic resource centers.

Collusion is defined as assistance or an attempt to assist another student in an act of academic dishonesty. Collusion is distinct from collaborative learning, which may be a valuable component of students’ scholarly development. Acceptable levels of collaboration vary in different courses, and students are expected to consult with their instructor if they are uncertain whether their cooperative activities are acceptable.