

Syllabus: Planet in Peril - Environmental Issues and Society

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Course Description (Spring 2012)

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%), Eco-Magazine (25%), Exam (15%), Media Project (30%), Environmental Service Program (%15)

Readings

Maathai, W. (2006) *Unbowed: A Memoir*
Pollan, M. (2008) *In Defense of Food: An Eater's Manifesto*
Gleick, P. (2011) *Bottled and Sold: The Story Behind Our Obsession with Bottled Water*
Jones, V. (2008) *The Green Collar Economy: How One Solution Can Fix Our Two Biggest Problems*

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 (1/17, 1/19): Messages of the Climate Crisis

Intro to Planet in Peril, Science and the Climate Crisis, the 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

Week 2 (1/24, 1/26): Macro-social Theory and Ecological Decline Environmental "Accounting"

The New Ecological Paradigm, Ecological Footprint, IPAT

*Dunlap (2002), *Paradigms, Theories and Environmental Sociology*

www.footprintnetwork.org

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

VIDEO - King Corn (www.kingcorn.net)

Week 3 (1/31, 2/2): Food Deserts & Food Justice

The Coalition of Immokalee Workers and the Student Farmworker Alliance

www.thefoodproject.org, www.realfoodchallenge.org, www.justfood.org

Article 1 DUE Monday, February 6th

Unit II. Green Media and Consumerism

Week 4 (2/7, 2/9): *Greenwashing and Deconstructing Green Messages.*

Environmental Discourse & Ecolinguistics

Gleick, whole book, *Mulhausler & Peace (2003) Environmental Discourse

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Week 5 (2/14, 2/16)

Case Study: Bottled Water & the World Water Wars

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

Week 6 (2/21, 2/23):

Exam review (2/14)

EXAM Tuesday, February 16th

Unit III. The Death of Environmentalism Debate

Week 7 (2/28, 3/1): Introduction to Environmental Justice and Framing Analysis

Majora Carter TED talk, Jones p.1-33, selected websites

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

Article 2 due. Friday, March 2nd

Week 8 SPRING BREAK

Week 9 (3/13, 3/15): The Death of Environmentalism Debate

** The Death/Soul of Environmentalism, *Death of Environmentalism Reader*

Week 10 (3/20, 3/22): Green Collar Jobs & Guerilla Media

VIDEO: Van Jones- Bioneers 2007 keynote address; Van Jones on Colbert Report

Jones p.34-113. **VIDEO:** Planting For Peace: Bury Seeds, Not Bodies. 3/22:

Media Project Proposal DUE 3/22

Unit IV. Green Media Production

Week 11 (3/27, 3/29): Environmental Images, Animations & Cartoons

Week 12 (4/3, 4/5): Environmental Music & Poetry:

Draft Media Project DUE 4/5, Maathai, p.139-229

No Class Thursday 4/5 for Easter Break

Unit V. Environmental Education and Activism

Week 13 (4/10, 4/12): Civic and Environmental Education

VIDEO: Taking Root- The Vision of Wangari Maathai

Maathai, p.230-307,

Article 3 DUE Monday, April 9th

Week 14 (4/17, 4/19) Hip Hop Ecology

**Cermak essays, *What is Education For – David Orr*

Final Media Project DUE 4/21

Week 15 (4/24, 4/26) Sharing Environmental Media for Social Change

Week 16 (5/1, 5/3) Youth and the Future of Environmentalism

Jones p.114-197, Pollan, p.102-205

Article 4 and full Eco-Magazine DUE Thursday May 10th

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Eco-Magazine (25% of final grade)

You will be producing a series of four articles in magazine style format (see TIME magazine for layout examples). This magazine will also include your write-ups of your experience in the environmental service program where you will attend environmental events on and off campus. The four articles will be due throughout the semester but a fully produced version of the magazine will be due May.

Articles will be written responding to a set prompt or question and must follow these guidelines:

Length: 600-700 words

Must Include: Title, a use of your own personal stories, at least one reference to the course readings, at least three images with captions.

Tips: These can be designed in any program that is comfortable for you, Microsoft Word, Adobe Illustrator or the Open Office Suite. Original images and figures are a plus.

Eco-Magazine Grading

Articles 1-4: 20% each totaling 80%

Cover and full layout with table of contents, page numbers, service write-ups: 20%

Media Project (30% of final grade)

You will be working in small teams to produce a 5-7 minute video about sustainability issues on campus. This includes but is not limited to interviews with key professionals on campus about ongoing projects, or interviews with student leaders in eco-clubs. The scope must be about Boston College and connect a broader environmental issue to campus activities. Other forms of storytelling such as drawings, animations and music are encouraged. There will be opportunities to learn and share how to assemble the project once the raw materials are gathered. As a class we will exhibit the films at a forum we plan and host for the broader BC community.

Media Project Grading

Proposal due 3/22: 10%

Draft due 4/5: 15%

Final project due 4/21: 75%

Environmental Service Program (15% of final grade)

You are required to attend 3 on-campus events and 1 off-campus events related to environmental issues during this semester. On-campus events can include lectures, film screenings, student club events, or research related activities. Off-campus events include attending conferences, visiting environmental non-profits, festivals, films, and meetings. Ideas for events should be approved by the professor in case of any question. The written reflections must also be included in your final Eco-magazine production.

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)