SOC 763 Topics in Environmental Sociology  Fall 2013
Tuesdays 9-11:30  McGuinn 415

Juliet Schor  Boston College
531 McGuinn Hall, x2-4056
juliet.schor@bc.edu
Office hours: Monday 12-1:30 and by appointment

Course Description. This course is designed as both a stand-alone class and a follow-on to Brian Gareau’s graduate Environmental Sociology course (SC 562). We will look at a series of topics within environmental sociology, broadly defined. These include the sociology of climate change, food and agriculture, environmental activism, sustainable consumption and its politics (including the politics of fair trade), environmental justice, the debate about limits to growth, and the emerging field of “new economics.” We will read a number of ethnographies that deal with various aspects of the environment. This is not a standard Environmental Sociology survey, which is typically organized by theoretical frameworks. Although there will be a fair amount of theory in the class, as a “topics” course it is structured around environmental problems (eg., climate change, food and agriculture). We will also include some debates within the larger environmental discourse, rather than just those that have dominated Environmental Sociology (eg., the Limits to Growth debate). Again, as a Topics Course, and because the field is growing so rapidly, it has a strong bias toward new literature, rather than classics in the field.

This field, more than most, has strong inter-disciplinary linkages, but also intra-disciplinary ones. The sociology sub-fields of social movements, politics, agriculture, development, consumption, political economy, urban, health and medicine, science and technology and others all have important literatures that relate to environmental issues (eg., impact of toxins on health, environmental movements, alternative agriculture, urban sustainability, “green” consumption). We will also read some geographers, economists, political scientists and anthropologists, although the bulk of the readings will be from sociology.

Reading List. The required readings are set, but the lists of recommended readings are incomplete. I will continue to work on those throughout the remainder of the summer.

Requirements. Course requirements include coming to class each week prepared to discuss the readings, a weekly 1 page written response to the readings to be posted Monday evenings by 8 pm, a 4-5 page critical essay on
one of the major readings in the class, and a 20 page seminar paper, due at the end of reading period.

**Books.** The following books have been ordered through the Boston College Bookstore.

Alison Alkon and Julian Ageyman, eds., *Cultivating Food Justice: Race, Class, and Sustainability* (MIT Press, 2011)
Javier Auyero and Débora Alejandra Swistun, *Flammable: Environmental Suffering in an Argentine Shantytown*, (Oxford University Press 2011)

**Reading List**

**I. Introduction**

**September 3 Introductions to Environmental Sociology**


**Recommended:**


**September 10  An Ethnographic Look at the Problem of Sustainability**


**II. Food and Agriculture**

**September 17  Critical Perspectives on the Alternative Food Movement I**


**September 24  Critical Perspectives on the Alternative Food Movement II**


**October 1 Critical Perspectives on the Alternative Food Movement III**


**Recommended:**


### III. Climate Change

#### October 8   Explaining Climate Inaction: Political Economy and Social Psychology


**October 15  International Climate Issues**


**Recommended:**


Kincaid, Graciela, and J. Timmons Roberts. 2013 “No Talk, but Some Walk: The Obama Administration’s First Term Rhetoric on Climate Change and its International Climate Budget Commitments.” *Global Environmental Politics* 13(4) Forthcoming, November.


IV. Environmental Justice and Social Movements

October 22  Toxics and Environmental Justice


James Boyce, “Is Inequality Bad for the Environment?” in Inequality, Cooperation, and Environmental Sustainability, Jean-Marie Baland, Pranab Bardhan and Samuel Bowles, eds. (Princeton 2006)

Recommended:
Robert J. Bullard, Dumping in Dixie
David N. Pellow, Garbage Wars
David N. Pellow and Lisa Park, The Slums of Aspen

October 29 Environmental Movements

Breakthrough Institute, 


Recommended:
Ramachandra Guha, The Unquiet Woods: Ecological Change and Peasant Resistance in the Himalaya (Delhi,1989), ch.7.
Paul Hawken, Blessed Unrest, (Penguin 2007).

V. Global Environmental Issues

Nov 5 Limits to Growth, Population, Governing the Commons

Donella Meadows, Jurgen Randers and Dennis Meadows, Limits to Growth: the 30 Year Update (Chelsea Green, 2004), chs 2-3, pp. 17-127. (if you didn’t read it earlier in the semester, please read now)


Elinor Ostrom, Governing the Commons: The Evolutions of Institutions for Collective Action (Cambridge, 1990), chs 1-3.

Recommended:
Mike Davis, Planet of Slums
New Economics Foundation, Growth Isn’t Possible.

November 12 Global Environmental Governance


VI. Movements for Sustainability

November 26 Sustainable Consumption and its Politics


**Recommended:**


Seyfang, ch 6


December 4 The Fair and Sustainable Trade Movement

Daniel Jaffee Brewing Justice, chs 1, 4-5, 7-9.

December 11 New Economics


Recommended: