Boston College

SC 349: Select Topics in Environmental Studies

Fall Semester 2014

Dr. Brian J. Gareau

LOCATION: Campion 231
Mondays, Wednesdays 3:00-4:15
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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, Ents, 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. Fitzmaurice, Organic Futures (Provided by Prof. Gareau on Canvas)

One further reading, “The Climate of Middle Earth” is also on Canvas.
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 submit a one to two-page write-up on the week’s reading **before** every first day of class for the week (i.e., Monday unless Monday is a holiday).

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 Monday 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.

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<tr>
<th>TABLE 2. STUDENT WORK &amp; PERCENTAGE OF GRADE EARNED</th>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm Essay 30%</td>
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<td>Final Essay 35%</td>
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<td>Daily Reading Summaries 25%</td>
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<td>In-class Participation 10%</td>
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<th>TABLE 1. GRADE SCALE</th>
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• Week 1 Wednesday September 3
  • Introductions

• Week 2 Monday Sept. 8, Wed. Sept. 10
  • Birth of Capitalism
    o Ecological Implications of the transition to Capitalism
    o Francis Bacon
  • Read: Leiss, Part One

• Week 3 Monday Sept. 15 and Wed. Sept. 17
    o Read: Leiss, Part Two

• Week 4 Monday Sept. 22 and Wed. Sept. 24
  • Eco-Feminism: Feminist Reactions to the Domination of Nature
    o Read: Carolyn Merchant, *Death of Nature*, Chs 1-6

• Week 5 Monday Sept. 29 and Wed. Oct. 1
  o Read: Merchant, *Death of Nature*, Chs 7-12

• Week 6 Monday Oct. 6 and Wed. Oct. 8
  • Morality in Science amid the Domination of Nature
    o Read: C.S. Lewis, *Abolition of Man*

• Week 7 Monday October 13 Columbus Day - No Class, Wed. Oct. 15
  Cultural Reactions
  • Post WWI Cultural Insights
    o Read: Tolkien *The Fellowship of the Ring*
    • Book ONE
    • Be Sure to read the Prologue (Concerning Hobbits)
    • Browse “The Climate of Middle Earth” (on Canvas)

  *** Midterm Exam Handed Out This Week ***

• Week 8 Monday October 20, Wed. Oct. 22
  o Read: Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*
    • Book TWO

  *** Hand in Exam on Wed. Oct. 22 ***

  *** No Write-up Due This Week ***

• Week 9 Monday Oct. 27, Wed. Oct. 29
  • 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*
  o Read Chs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10
• Week 10 Monday Nov. 3 and Wed. Nov. 5
  • Origins of Environmental Sociology and Environmental Justice
    o Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring*
    o Read: Chs 1-9

• Week 11 Monday Nov. 10, Wed. Nov. 12
  • 1970s Environmental Sociology, cont.
    o Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring*
    o Read: Chs 10-17

• Week 12 Monday Nov. 17, Wed. Nov. 19
  • Back to the Shire? Barriers and Bridges to Solutions in Sustainable Agriculture
    o Read: Fitzmaurice, selections from *Organic Futures* (on Canvas)

• Week 13 Monday Nov. 24, Wed. Nov. 26- Thanksgiving- No Class
  • Back to the Shire?, continued
    o Read: *Organic Futures*, selections (on Canvas)

• Week 14 Monday Dec. 1, Wed. Dec 3
  • Other Searches for Sustainability
    Guest Lectures on both days!
    • Monday: Monique Ouimette: “Common Scents: Negotiating Fragrance and toxicity in the Workplace”
    • Wednesday: Liz Tov: “Animal Justice and the Search for Sustainability”

  *** Final Exam Handed Out This Week ***

• Week 15 Monday Dec. 8, Wed. Dec 10
  • Monday, Guest Lecture, Will Atwood-Charles: "Makerspaces and the Paradox of the Elite Sharing Economy"
  • Wed.: Course Summary

  *** Final Exam Due Dec. 10 ***