

**SOC 447**  
**ENVIRONMENTAL SOCIOLOGY:**  
**NATURE, CULTURE, POWER**  
**FALL 2012**

**Instructor:**

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**Classes:**

Mondays and Wednesdays 11-12:20 PM  
1022 Lincoln Hall

**Course webpage:**

<http://compass.uiuc.edu>

**Office hours:**

Thursdays 3-5 pm or by appointment

**COURSE THEME**

The purpose of this course is to acquaint students with various theoretical approaches to how nature, power and culture are intertwined and with empirical studies that successfully operationalize these three basic categories and their articulation. We will seek answers to the following key questions:

- What is the effect of different structures of domination (patriarchy, racism, colonialism, and capitalism) on how nature is used, on the nature of environmental problems and on the social construction of nature and environmental problems?
- To what extent have environmentalism and Western ecological discourse become a new form of imperialism?
- How do critical social theories, such as Marxist political economy, the Frankfurt School, and feminism approach these questions?
- How does a sociological analysis help us in orienting ourselves in environmental conflicts and in solving environmental problems?
- What experiments exist in the US to solve ecological and social problems together?

We will start by reviewing key environmental problems, with special regards to new scientific understandings of toxins in our environment, global climate change, and to the so-called overpopulation problem. We will then study theoretical approaches that tend to see the cause of ecological problems in capitalism's logic. After the midterm examination we will focus on theories that see the problem primarily in scientific rationality or the oppression of certain social groups, whether women, racial and ethnic minorities or colonized people. We

will also include readings on ideologies of environmentalism and social exclusion in environmental movements and projects.

**Students' responsibilities:**

- Reading all assigned texts by the date indicated in syllabus. The average weekly reading will be around 90 pages. Asterisks in the schedule mark the more difficult texts—please make sure you leave enough time for reading and digesting these.
- Completing short in-class writing assignments
- Completing online quizzes (Compass)
- Checking course webpage daily for new links, instructions, study questions, etc.
- Thoughtful, focused, and respectful contributions to discussion in class (graded)
- Completing a midterm paper (essay of 5-7 pages)
- Completing the final paper (individual essay of 10-12 pages)
- Approaching instructor with questions before problems develop into crisis
- Turn off cell phones and all electronic devices including laptops, during class time. Non-cooperating students will be sent home and marked absent.
- Stay awake during class and stay inside the classroom. Non-cooperating students will be sent home and marked absent.
- A plus: adding course-related material (illustrations, news, etc.) to the course webpage on Compass.

PLEASE DO NOT EMAIL PROFESSOR! USE THE MAIL FUNCTION ON COMPASS TO ENSURE YOUR MAIL IS OPENED.

**Instructor will:**

- provide context-setting short lectures and explain the rationale behind each assignment
- devise learning tools
- post all assignments and rules on course webpage
- check course webpage twice daily
- ensure a non-intimidating and democratic environment for discussion
- regularly check on students' understanding of the material and on progress
- grade and return students' written assignments within ten days of submission
- refer students to auxiliary material if needed
- notify students about emerging problems in time to rectify them before final grades are assigned
- refer students to Emergency Dean in case of more than two absences and missed assignments

**GRADING**

Your final grade will primarily be based on your midterm and final essay grades. Other grade components include quiz scores, participation in class, and contributing related materials to class and the class webpage.

## **TEXTS**

Bell, Michael. 1998. *An invitation to environmental sociology*. Thousand Oaks: Pine Forge Press. Third Edition

Kuletz, Valerie L. 1998. *The Tainted Desert: Environmental and Social Ruin in the American West*. New York: Routledge.

Colborn, Theo, Dianne Dumanoski and John Peterson Myers. 1997. *Our Stolen Future: Are we Threatening our Fertility, Intelligence, and Survival? A Scientific Detective Story*. New York: Penguin.

Book chapters and articles are marked with (R) in the schedule below and they are on electronic course reserve. Books are also on reserve at the UGL.

## **SCHEDULE:**

### **INTRODUCTION TO ENVIRONMENTAL SOCIOLOGY**

#### **August 27**

No reading.

### **RISK SOCIETY: THE NEW FACE OF ENVIRONMENTAL RISKS**

#### **August 29**

Colborn, Theo, Dianne Dumanoski and John Peterson Myers. 1997. *Our Stolen Future: Are we Threatening our Fertility, Intelligence, and Survival? A Scientific Detective Story*. New York: Penguin. Chs.1, 2, 3

In-class video: *Rachel Carson*

#### **September 5**

Colborn, Theo, Dianne Dumanoski and John Peterson Myers. 1997. *Our Stolen Future: Are we Threatening our Fertility, Intelligence, and Survival? A Scientific Detective Story*. New York: Penguin. Chs.5, 6, 10

#### **September 10**

Colborn, Theo, Dianne Dumanoski and John Peterson Myers. 1997. *Our Stolen Future: Are we Threatening our Fertility, Intelligence, and Survival? A Scientific Detective Story*. New York: Penguin. Pp, 225-230 (from Ch. 12), Chs.13, 14

#### **September 12**

Bell, Ch.1.1-18

\*Beck, Ulrich. 1992. *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*. London: Sage. (Ch. 1.) (R)

#### **September 17**

Bell, Ch. 9.

## **IS THERE AN OVER-POPULATION PROBLEM?**

### **September 19: Malthusianism**

Bell. Ch. 4. 85-89

In class video: *The Legacy of Malthus* by Deepa Dhanraj. Oley, PA: Bullfrog Films, 1994.

### **September 24: Critique of Malthusianism**

Bell. Ch. 4. 89-110.

### **September 26: China's one-child policy**

Anagnost, Ann. 1995. "A Surfeit of Bodies: Population and the Rationality of the State in Post-Mao China." In *Conceiving the New World Order: The Global Politics of Reproduction*, edited by F. D. Ginsburg and R. Rapp. Berkeley: University of California Press. 22-41. (R)

## **THE TREADMILLS OF CAPITALISM**

### **October 1: Consumption**

Bell, Ch. 2 33-56.

### **October 3: Production**

Bell, Ch. 3. 57-74

## **BRING EXAMPLES THAT ILLUSTRATE A MARXIAN RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CAPITALISM AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS**

### **October 8: The example of food production**

Gottlieb, Robert. 2001. *Environmentalism Unbound: Exploring New Pathways for Change*. Cambridge: MIT Press. 181-226 (R).

MIDTERM DUE: October 8 in class. Hard copies only!

## **SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGICAL RATIONALITY**

### **October 10: The Frankfurt School**

\*Leiss, William. 1994 (1972). "The Domination of Nature." In *Key Concepts in Critical Theory: Ecology*, edited by C. Merchant. New Jersey: Humanities Press. 55-64. (R)

## **BRING EXAMPLES OF SCIENTIFIC ENVIRONMENTALISM OR OF SCIENTIFIC DEBATES ON PARTICULAR ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES.**

**October 15: The role of science and technological rationality in environmental problems**

Bell, Ch. 3. 74-84

**October 17: The role of science and technological rationality in environmental movements**

Yearley, Steven. 1997. "Science and environment." In *The International Handbook of Environmental Sociology*, edited by M. Redclift and G. Woodgate. Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar. 227-236. (R)

**The role of science and technological rationality in environmental racism**

**October 22**

Valerie L. Kuletz. 1998. *The Tainted Desert: Environmental and Social Ruin in the American West*. New York: Routledge. 3-37.

**October 24**

Valerie L. Kuletz. 1998. *The Tainted Desert: Environmental and Social Ruin in the American West*. New York: Routledge. 38-119.

**SPRING BREAK**

**October 29**

Valerie L. Kuletz. 1998. *The Tainted Desert: Environmental and Social Ruin in the American West*. New York: Routledge. 122-204.

**October 31**

Valerie L. Kuletz. 1998. *The Tainted Desert: Environmental and Social Ruin in the American West*. New York: Routledge. 205-290.

**ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM**

**November 5**

Bell, Ch. 1. 18-24, Ch. 5. 111-131.

**November 7**

Bullard, Robert 1994 (1993). "Environmental Racism and the Environmental Justice Movement." In *Key Concepts in Critical Theory: Ecology*, edited by C. Merchant. New Jersey: Humanities Press. 254-265. (R)

**November 12**

Di Chiro, Giovanna. 1996. "Nature as Community: The Convergence of Environmental and Social Justice." In *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, edited by W. Cronon. New York: Norton. 298-320.

On Katrina (TBA)

## **PATRIARCHY AND ECOFEMINISM**

### **November 14: Background on dualisms**

Bell, Ch. 6. 133-154

THANKSGIVING BREAK

### **November 26: Gender and environmental domination**

Shiva, Vandana. 1994 (1988). "Development, Ecology, and Women." In *Key Concepts in Critical Theory: Ecology*, edited by C. Merchant. New Jersey: Humanities Press. 272-279. (R)

BRING EXAMPLES THAT ILLUSTRATE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PATRIARCHY AND ECOLOGY

## **THE IDEOLOGY OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN**

### **November 28**

Bell, Ch. 7

### **December 3**

Bell, Ch. 8

In class video: *Second nature*

## **ALTERNATIVES**

### **December 5**

Bell, Ch. 10,

### **December 10**

Bell, Ch. 11.

### **December 12**

Summary

FINAL PAPERS DUE: December 17, 5pm.

### **Instructions on quizzes**

- Time, duration and subject of quizzes will be announced in class and on Compass (in general, quizzes will be up for three days).
- To ensure that quizzes are not missed due to technical problems, students have two chances to take the same quiz
- Questions will be randomized for each attempt.
- It is the student's responsibility to leave sufficient time for a retake if it is necessary. For example if you know you are not going to have Internet access for the second day of the quiz duration, you must take the quiz on the first day. I will not accept ANY excuses for missing quizzes. If you feel you have a legitimate excuse for missing both attempts get a note from the Emergency Dean.
- The score of the latter attempt will be entered into your grade book—also on Compass.
- Quiz questions will be of either the 'True or False' or multiple choice type.

### **Other good advice**

- Respect begets respect: If you want to be treated respectfully treat your peers and professor with respect. Some non-verbal behavior is often interpreted as lack of attention and lack of respect, such as looking away from teacher, talking to others while professor is talking, having headphones on during class, walking in and out of the classroom, arriving late more than twice, closing eyes, reading non-class material. Avoid these.
- If you have questions about the grading of your assignment, please approach professor in office hours and NOT right before or after class, when it is too hectic to give proper attention to the problem (Also see the handouts on reading evaluations, available on Compass.)
- Follow the email etiquette in your electronic communication with your professor (on Compass).
- If you feel lost, don't understand why on earth you should be reading the stuff we do please see your professor.
- In general, try to have a mentor while in college. They will help you with keeping your eyes on the prize.