

HEN593 Masters Seminar: Topics in Environmental Sociology
Mgr. Benjamin Vail, MSc.
Spring 2007

Class hours: Thursdays 12.00-13.30 in room 35
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Office: Joštova 10, room 314
Office hours: Thursday 14.00-15.00, by appointment

Course description

This course introduces many of the major schools of thought and topics of research in the field of environmental sociology, and presents a historical overview of the development of environmental sociological theory and praxis over time. The course will consist of weekly seminar meetings. Students should read the assigned chapters in the course textbook and use the Moodle e-learning program to read the supplemental literature, which will be available electronically in PDF and/or Word format.

The course is based on the textbook *An invitation to environmental sociology* (volume 2) by Michael Mayerfeld Bell (ISBN 0761987754). More than one copy is reserved for you to read in the FSS library.

The course is an opportunity for students to practice English. The textbook and other literature have been carefully chosen to minimize technical language. However, a university-level class will involve the use of some jargon. Students are encouraged to ask in class if they have any questions about the language.

Using Moodle

Class resources are available to students through the Philosophy Faculty's Moodle e-learning system. This system is used to post resources such as the syllabus, supplemental literature, and information about assignments and the seminar schedule. Students can login to Moodle at <http://www.phil.muni.cz/elf>. Course materials are listed under the title, "HEN593 Masters Seminar: Topics in Environmental Sociology." It is possible you may need to make a POP3 password to access the Moodle system. This can be done at this address: <https://is.muni.cz/auth/system/heslo.pl#pop>. Please contact the instructor with any questions or concerns about using Moodle.

Office hours

I will be in Brno usually one day per week. Normal office hours will be Thursdays from 14.00-15.00 in the doctoral students' office in Room 314, on the 3rd floor in Joštova 10. Please contact me to schedule an appointment. You can always send me questions or comments by e-mail.

Assignments and grading policy

Because this is a seminar course, emphasis is placed on student participation in the classroom discussion. Much of the final grade is based on your active participation in the class. The classroom language is English. Students are encouraged to ask critical questions and engage in respectful debate about the ideas presented in the literature, by the instructor, and by other students. Your final participation grade may be modified positively or negatively to reflect how active you were in the seminar.

A short quiz will be given during the first five minutes of each lecture. The quiz questions will be based on the assigned reading for that week. The quiz turned in with your name serves as proof of your attendance. **You are expected to attend every seminar meeting.**

A ten page final essay will be due on June 18. The final seminar meeting is scheduled for May 17, so this gives you a month to research and write your essay. Students should use ISO 690 standards for referencing written and electronic sources of information (see "Writing resources" on the Moodle page for more information).

Students will receive a final letter grade (A-F).

Final grade components

25% – Weekly quiz
25% – Attendance and class participation
50% – Final essay

Final grade scale

A = 90 – 100%
B = 80 – 90%
C = 70 – 80%
D = 60 – 70%
E = 50 – 60%
F = <50%

Academic honesty

The Faculty of Social Studies at MU expects students to know the study rules and maintain academic honesty by refraining from plagiarism and from cheating during exams. Plagiarism means that one presents other peoples' ideas as one's own and does not credit the author. Plagiarism is one of the most serious breaches of ethical standards in the academic environment, for it denies the mission of the university and the meaning of studying. From a legal perspective, plagiarism is the stealing of intellectual property.

Academic dishonesty is not tolerated under any circumstances at FSS. Each case of such cheating will be punished by the most serious sanction, **unconditional expulsion from the university**. We recommend that students become thoroughly acquainted with the problem of plagiarism and how to avoid it. If you have questions about plagiarism, please contact the instructor. When writing assignments, give a proper citation for an author when you quote or paraphrase his/her writing and ideas.

Podvodné plnění studijních povinností

Výuka na FSS MU předpokládá, že studenti znají studijní předpisy a že se nedopouštějí podvodného plnění studijních povinností, zejména opisování u zkoušek a plagiátorství, tedy vydávání cizích myšlenek za vlastní a přebírání myšlenek jiných autorů bez uvedení autorství. Plagiátorství patří k nezávažnějším etickým proviněním v akademickém prostředí, popírá poslání university i smysl studia. Z právního hlediska je plagiátorství krádeží cizího duševního vlastnictví.

Podvodné plnění studijních povinností nemůže být za žádných okolností na FSS tolerováno. Každý případ podvodného chování bude trestán nejpřísnější sankcí, a to **nepodmínečným vyloučením ze studia**. Studentům doporučujeme co nejdůkladněji se seznámit s problémem plagiátorství a se způsoby, jak se mu vyhnout.

Weekly schedule

22 February	Orientation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discuss syllabus, grading policy, seminar participation expectations, etc.
1 March	Introduction to environmental sociology
	Required reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bell Chapter 1: Environmental problems and society Recommended reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dunlap & Catton: Struggling with human exemptionalism• Goldman & Schurman: Closing the great divide• Buttel: Environmental sociology and the classical sociological tradition• Buttel & Gijswijt - Emerging trends in environmental sociology• Dunlap & Catton: Environmental sociology• Park: Human ecology• Durkheim: What is a social fact?
8 March	Consumption, materialism, and modern society
	Required reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bell Chapter 2: Consumption and materialism Recommended reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Abramovitz: Putting value on nature's free services• Mitchell: Thorstein Veblen• Slater: Themes from the sociology of consumption• Union of Concerned Scientists: The consumer's guide to effective environmental choices (chapter 1)• United Nations Environment Program: Sustainable consumption opportunities in the Czech Republic

15 March	The treadmill of production
<p>Required reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bell Chapter 3: Money and machines <p>Recommended reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buttel: The treadmill of production • Gould, Pellow & Schnaiberg. Interrogating the treadmill of production • Schnaiberg, Pellow, Weinberg: The treadmill of production and the environmental state • Schnaiberg: Sustainable development and the treadmill of production 	
22 March	Sustainability
<p>Required reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bell Chapter 4: Population and development • The Worldwatch Institute: What is sustainability, anyway? • Interview with Julian Simon <p>Recommended reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daly: Sustainable growth – an impossibility theorem • Hardin: The tragedy of the commons • Summers: On sustainability 	
29 March	Health, risk, and environmental justice
<p>Required reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bell Chapter 5: Body and health • Bell Chapter 9: Risk <p>Recommended reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you know? What is environmental justice? • Polluting the poor • The rise of environmental justice • Molotch: Oil in Santa Barbara and power in America • Beck: Ecological politics in an age of risk • Beck: Politics in risk society 	
5 April	Films and discussion: Sustainability, health, risk, and environmental justice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The digital dump: Exporting high-tech re-use and abuse to Africa</i> • <i>Exporting harm: The high-tech trashing of Asia</i> 	
12 April	Ideology of environmental domination
<p>Required reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bell Chapter 6: The ideology of environmental domination <p>Recommended reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White: The historical roots of our ecologic crisis • Schoch: A conversation with Carolyn Merchant • Charlene Spretnak: Critical and constructive contributions of ecofeminism 	

19 April	Ideology of environmental concern
<p>Required reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bell Chapter 7: The ideology of environmental concern <p>Recommended reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buttel: Ecological modernization as social theory • Pellow, Schnaiberg, Weinberg: Putting the ecological modernization thesis to the test • Fisher & Freudenburg: Ecological modernization and its critics • Mol & Spargaaren: Ecological modernization and the environmental state 	
26 April	Film: Global climate change
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>An inconvenient truth</i> 	
3 May	Discussion: Global climate change
<p>Required reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bell Chapter 8: The human nature of nature • Al Gore: Ten simple things you can do to help stop global warming • George Monbiot: Save the planet in 10 steps • Pollitt: Saving the planet: Empty gestures • Kelly: The hidden opportunity in global warming • Morris: What Al Gore hasn't told you about global warming • Cohen: Some inconvenient truths about the politics of environmental crisis <p>Recommended reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kotecký: Globální změny klimatu: očekávané dopady v České republice • Lovgren: Al Gore's "Inconvenient truth" movie: Fact or hype? • Lewis: Al Gore's An inconvenient truth: One-sided, misleading, exaggerated, speculative, wrong • Downs: Up and down with ecology • Gamson: Media discourse as a framing resource • Castree & Braun: The construction of nature and the nature of construction 	
10 May	Film
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The end of suburbia: oil depletion and the collapse of the American dream</i> <p>Recommended reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ExxonMobil: Peak oil? • Luttwak: The truth about global oil supply • Hirsch: The inevitable peaking of world oil production • Hirsch: Peaking of world oil production 	
17 May	Environmental problems and solutions
<p>Required reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bell Chapter 10: Organizing the ecological society • Kunstler: The long emergency • Kennedy: Crimes against nature 	
June 18	*** Final essay due 23.59 ***