

SOC165: Introduction to Environmental Sociology

Mgr. Benjamin Vail, M.Sc., Ph.D.
Autumn 2010

Class time: Thursdays 10.00-11.30
Classroom: 24
Credits: 6
Office hours: Tuesdays 14.00-16.00 in room 3.59

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 research. Each week, students are expected to attend the lecture, read the assigned literature, and watch required multimedia resources. By the end of the semester, students will have an in-depth understanding of the development of environmental sociology as an academic discipline, gain knowledge about historical and contemporary environmental issues, and be able to critically analyze the material and ideal relationships between modern society and its biophysical environment.

Using the MU Information System

Class resources are available to students through Masaryk University's online Information System (IS). Under the course title "SOC165: Introduction to Environmental Sociology" you will find an interactive syllabus which contains important information about the course and the weekly schedule with links to course materials. Please contact the instructor with any questions or concerns about using the IS.

Evaluation

Success in this course depends on reading and watching all assigned materials, which serve as the basis for the two exams that determine your grade for the semester. Students are expected to attend every lecture, and information provided in lectures may also be tested in the exams. You will receive a final letter grade (A-F) for the semester based on the following components:

Final grade components	Final grade scale
40% – Mid-term exam	A = 90 – 100%
60% – Final exam	B = 80 – 90%
	C = 70 – 80%
	D = 60 – 70%
	E = 50 – 60%
	F = <50%

E-mail Policy

Students may contact the instructor at any time by e-mail with questions about the course. I will strive to reply to your questions within 48 hours of receipt of your e-mail. I usually do not read or respond to e-mail on weekends or holidays.

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. The official FSS policy on academic honesty is available in the course's interactive syllabus in IS in English and Czech. Academic dishonesty is not tolerated under any circumstances at FSS. The minimum penalty for academic dishonesty is expulsion from the course, a grade of F for the semester, and referral to the Faculty disciplinary committee.

Weekly Schedule

Week	Date	Lecture Topic	Required Reading	Required Video
1	Sept 23	Introduction to Environmental Sociology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Syllabus • Bell Chapter 1: Environmental Problems and Society • McCarthy and King: Environmental Problems Require Social Solutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State of the Planet <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Part 1: Is There a Crisis? ○ Part 2: Why is There a Crisis? ○ Part 3: The Future of Life
2	Sept 30	Consumption, Materialism, and Modern Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bell: Consumption and Materialism (chapter 2) • Slater: Themes from the Sociology of Consumption • Union of Concerned Scientists: <i>The Consumer's Guide to Effective Environmental Choices</i> (chapter 1) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mathis Wackernagel: The Ecological Footprint • Barry Schwartz: The Paradox of Choice • ABC News: Pacific Garbage Dump • Charles Moore: Sailing the Great Pacific Garbage Patch
3	Oct 7	The Treadmill of Production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bell: Money and Machines (chapter 3) • Buttel: The Treadmill of Production 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annie Leonard: The Story of Stuff
4	Oct 14	Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bell: Population and Development (chapter 4) • Prugh and Assadourian: What is Sustainability, Anyway? • Interview with Julian Simon 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vandana Shiva: Defending Biodiversity • Monsanto Company: Global Benefits of Plant Biotechnology • Bonnie Bucqueroux: Curing America's Eating Disorder • Interview with Michael Pollan
5	Oct 21	Health, Risk, and Environmental Justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bell: Body and Health (chapter 5) • Bell: Risk (chapter 9) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vyvyan Howard: The Chemical Industry and Toxicology • Vyvyan Howard: Rising Cancer Rates (parts 1 & 2) • <i>The Digital Dump: Exporting High-Tech Re-Use and Abuse to Africa</i> • <i>Exporting Harm: The High-Tech Trashing of Asia</i> • "Mountaintop Removal" Coal Mining in the US Appalachian Mountains • Greenpeace: The Mexican Electronics Industry
6	Oct 28	* NO LECTURE * Ideology of Environmental Domination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bell: The Ideology of Environmental Domination (chapter 6) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 11th Hour • Why Should Christians Care about the Environment? • BBC Interview with Richard Cizik

7	Nov 4	* NO LECTURE * Marx and the Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dickens: Marx and the Environment • Murphy: Environmental Accountability under State Socialism • Burkett: On Some Common Misconceptions About Nature and Marx • O'Connor: Capitalism, Nature, Socialism
8	Nov 11	* NO LECTURE * Mid-term Exam	
9	Nov 18	Ideology of Environmental Concern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bell: The Ideology of Environmental Concern (chapter 7) • Buttell: Ecological Modernization as Social Theory • Michael Braungart: "Cradle to Cradle" Design • Remembering Rachel Carson • Satish Kumar: Deep Ecology
10	Nov 25	The Social Construction of Nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bell: The Human Nature of Nature (chapter 8)
11	Dec 2	Sociological Perspectives on Global Climate Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gore: Ten simple things you can do to help stop global warming • Monbiot: Save the planet in 10 steps • Cohen: Some inconvenient truths about the politics of environmental crisis • Morris: What Al Gore hasn't told you about global warming • Kelly: The hidden opportunity in global warming • Šimůnek and Růžička: Vaclav Klaus on climate change • Jackson: Insurance industry feels the heat of global warming • The Independent: Scientist publishes 'escape route' from global warming • BBC: <i>The Truth About Climate Change</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Part 1: Are We Changing Planet Earth? ◦ Part 2: Can We Save Planet Earth? • Interview with Bjørn Lomborg about climate change • David Keith on geoengineering
12	Dec 9	Peak Oil and Modern Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Owen et al.: World Oil Reserves • ExxonMobil: Peak Oil? • Kunstler: The Long Emergency • Der Spiegel: Peak Oil and the German Government • The Guardian: US Military and Peak Oil & UK Government and Peak Oil • <i>The End of Suburbia: Oil Depletion and the Collapse of the American Dream</i> • <i>Power of Community</i> • Colin Campbell: The Future of Oil • Richard Heinberg: Peak Oil (parts 1 & 2)
13	Dec 16	Environmental Problems and Solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bell: Organizing the Ecological Society (chapter 10) • Kennedy: Crimes Against Nature • York, Rosa and Dietz: The Environmental Consequences of Modernity • <i>A Convenient Truth</i> • Bill McKibben: Proactive Localism • Reuters: Community Gardens Blossom