

Environment, Natural Resources, and Society
CES/SOC/FEW 248
University of Wisconsin-Madison

Fall 2019

Instructor: June Jeon
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Credits: 3

Classroom: 1510 Microbial Sciences
Class Time: MWF 11 – 11:50 AM
Office Hours: WF 1:30 – 3 PM
or by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces undergraduate students of various backgrounds to the sociological study of society and ‘the environment’. I highlight the latter in quotes to emphasize the changing ways we understand what falls into this category of the supposedly non-human or extra-human. Following contemporary uses in fields such as environmental justice, we will examine relationships – two-way relationships, not unidirectional – between society and many types of environments, including the *built* environment in and around cities.

The scope of relevant research is quite extensive. Rather than trying to survey it all this session, we have a particular focus. Over the semester, we will consider how social locations and identities – expressed in categories of class, race, gender, political affiliations, etc. – influence different ideas, action, and experiences on environmental issues.

Social locations in our world rarely occur on equal footing; some social groupings are given more status, privilege, and power than others. Our course will focus on how these power and status differentials play out in ‘the environment’. We will study:

- how environmental issues become recognized or are disregarded;
- how environmental benefits and harms do not occur randomly but instead are strongly influenced by social organization (social structures); and
- how different social groups have organized collective responses to environmental inequalities.

This course admittedly is just one possible sociological take on the topic of environment, natural resources, and society. We will talk quite a bit about limitations to perspective throughout the semester, understanding that this course too is just one perspective on these important topics.

The literature we will read draws heavily from sociology but is also multidisciplinary. Students do not need previous coursework in sociology or environment-related fields to enjoy and succeed in this course. An open mind and an ongoing commitment to reading and discussion, however, are critical.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. Examine concepts and theories of basic social processes, especially those concerning relationships between society and the environment.
2. Consider how social science arguments are constructed and evaluated.
3. Develop critical thinking skills around social organization and social processes.
4. Develop written and oral communication skills for the social sciences.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS (Total score: 1000 pts)

1. Absence policy

You are entitled to **three absences** throughout the semester. Each absence beyond the limit of three will result in lowering your course grade by one half grade (i.e., 4 absences turns an A into an AB; 5 absences turn an A into a B). I do not distinguish between “excused” and “unexcused” absences. An exception will be applied to student athletes. Student athletes’ travels will be all regarded as “excused” absences, beyond three absences. I suggest you keep three absences on hold for illness or other unanticipated events that might interfere with your attendance. All of this said, should something dramatic in your life prevent you from doing a significant amount of work for the class, you should arrange to speak with me as soon as you are aware that you face substantial barriers to getting your work done in a timely fashion. I am sympathetic to students who approach life’s challenges responsibly. Please consult with me.

2. Participation in class discussion (100 pts)

Although attendance is imperative to your final grade, attendance alone is by no means sufficient. What you learn and the success of the course depends on your active engagement in class discussion. You need not always have to say something, but your consistent and informed participation in discussion is a course requirement. The lecturer will often facilitate small-group discussions during the class, and students are expected to actively engage in the intellectual dialogue. To better participate in the lecture, it is very important that you finish the assigned reading materials of the week in advance. I emphasize again: please do the assigned readings, or you won’t be able to follow the class.

3. Weekly quizzes (200 pts = 20 pts * 10)

Based on assigned weekly reading materials, you will be asked to take weekly quizzes on the Canvas page. Total 11 quizzes will be available, and you can voluntarily drop one week. Regardless of how many quizzes you take or drop, best ten weeks will be added toward the total score. Quiz questions will be entirely based on the assigned readings. No more than five simple and easy questions will be asked. Every week, quiz for the weekly readings is due on Sunday midnight, **prior to** the class meeting.

4. Synthetic essays (200 pts = 100 pts * 2)

You will write two synthetic essays during the semester. In each essay, you will be asked to answer an assigned essay question by referring to a set of reading materials from multiple weeks. You can also use your personal history to make your essay more engaging and clearer. Each essay should be no longer than *two pages, excluding the bibliography* (double spaced, 12 pts, Times New Roman, APA format). Please submit your essays electronically (via Canvas). The detail of the assignment will be announced in the lecture.

5. Midterm exam (200 pts)

The midterm exam will be in combination of formats, including a simple identification part, a short answer part, and a short essay part. The purpose of the exam is to test your knowledge of the lectures, readings, and class discussions.

6. Final exam (300 pts)

The final exam is *non-cumulative* and will be in combination of formats, including a simple identification, a short answer, and a long essay parts. The purpose of the exam is to test your knowledge of the lectures, readings, and class discussions.

You are welcome to discuss your assignment progress with me during office hours. The Writing Center is an excellent resource that you should take advantage of in crafting your papers (6171 Helen White Hall, 608-263-1992, www.writing.wisc.edu).

7. Grading scale (in percentile scale)

A 93-100, AB 88-92. B 83-87, BC 78-82, C 70-77, D 60-69, F below 60

ADDITIONAL REMARKS

1. Plagiarism

Students who cheat or attempt to cheat in their final term paper will automatically receive an F for the course. In addition, the incident will be reported in writing to the Dean of Students so that the latter may decide whether further disciplinary action is needed. A clear definition of plagiarism as well as information about disciplinary sanctions for academic misconduct may be found at the Dean of Students website. Knowledge of these rules is each student's responsibility, and lack of familiarity with the rules does not excuse misconduct.

2. Emailing

You can also contact me by email at any point during the semester. I will do my best to reply promptly, but you should allow 24-72 hours for my replies (particularly on weekends). So please don't wait until the last minute to ask important clarifying questions on assignments. When you write, please put the words "CES 248" at the beginning of the subject line. Finally,

before you email me, please thoroughly search the syllabus and @Canvas for an answer to your question!

3. Electronic devices

No cell phones are allowed in class. Please turn them off or silence them when you walk in the door. This is extremely basic commonsense in the university setting, but surprisingly often neglected code by so many so often. Your use of laptops, tablet pc, and other electronic devices are allowed, as long as they will be used for your learning experience. When you use your electronic devices in the class, please also mute the sound of them. A charming bell sound from your Facebook messenger does no good for the class. You will be surprised how much is it so obvious for the class instructor in figuring out whether students are using their laptop for learning or fun during the class. Please don't betray my trust on you.

4. Harassment and Title IX

UW-Madison prohibits discrimination in all University programs and activities, and this includes sex discrimination and sexual harassment. Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender is a Civil Rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, etc.

Information on Title IX: <http://www.oed.wisc.edu/title-ix.htm>

Information on sexual harassment: <http://www.oed.wisc.edu/sexual-harassment-information.htm>

Information on sexual assault: <http://www.oed.wisc.edu/safety-and-sexual-assault.htm>

5. Accommodations

I wish to include fully any students with special needs in this course. Please let me know (the earlier the better) if you need any special accommodations in the curriculum, instruction, or evaluation procedures in order to enable you to participate fully. The McBurney Center (www.mcburney.wisc.edu, 702 W. Johnson Street, 608-263-2741) can provide useful assistance and documentation.

CORE TEXTS

All assigned reading materials will be posted on Canvas page.

COURSE OUTLINE & READINGS

General remarks

- A reading load of this class is moderate—you will be asked to read less than 50 pages per week at maximum.
- When you read academic journal articles, please *skim* the literature review part and try to capture the main argument & findings of the paper. Literature review of the article helps

readers to position the work in context of academic discourse; however, for the purpose of this class, it is only recommended to you to cover this part.

- The lecture will be structured based on assumption that all students finished the assigned readings of the week prior to the class meeting.

I. Setting the stage: What are our problems?

WEEK 1 (Sep 4th)

- Course overview (No readings)
- Guest lecturer: Todd Flournoy
- Movie: *Gasland* (2010)

WEEK 2 (Sep 9th)

- Exploring classics & defining environmental sociology

Capek SM (2009) The social construction of nature: of computers, butterflies, dogs, and trucks. *Twenty lessons in environmental sociology*: 11–24.

Catton Jr WR and Dunlap RE (1978) Environmental sociology: A new paradigm. *The American Sociologist*. JSTOR: 41–49.

“One way to look at social structure is to see it as invisible strings that link individuals to social groups and to the environment in a patterned way. Why are these relationships so invisible in the first place? Some are taken for granted and are simply not thought about, while others are masked by power relationships. (Capek 2009: 14)”

II. Nature and Society: Where do we live?

WEEK 3 (Sep 16th)

- How we shape, and are shaped by, the environment? (Cronon, 1983)

Cronon W (1983) *Changes in the Land*. Hill and Wang. (Preface, Chapter 2, and Conclusion)

“When human beings, Indian or European, inhabited and altered New England environments, they were a part of that linear history. (...) Whereas the natural ecosystem tended toward a patchwork of diverse communities arranged almost randomly on the landscape—its very continuity depending on that disorder—the human tendency was to systematize the patchwork and impose a more regular pattern on it. (Cronon 1983: 33)”

WEEK 4 (Sep 23rd)

- Anthropocene: Geology of mankind (Crutzen, 2002; Steffen et al., 2011)

Crutzen PJ (2002) Geology of mankind. *Nature* 415(6867): 23. DOI: 10.1038/415023a.

Steffen W, Grinevald J, Crutzen P, et al. (2011) The Anthropocene: conceptual and historical perspectives. *Philosophical Transactions Of The Royal Society A-Mathematical Physical And*. DOI: 10.1098/rsta.2010.0327.

Recommended: *Anthropocene: The Human Epoch (2018)—Film*

This documentary film will be available for FREE on September 25th (Wed) at Marquee Theatre at Union South, 7 pm. Please visit there with your friends!

“The ultimate drivers of the Anthropocene, if they continue unabated through this century, may well threaten the viability of contemporary civilization and perhaps even the future existence of Homo sapiens. (Steffen et al., 2011: 862)”

III. Economy and Environment

WEEK 5 (Sep 30th)

- Capitalism and Environment I (Wright, 2008)

Wright E (2008) What is so bad about capitalism? In: *Real Utopias*. (Selected pages)

Bell and Ashwood (2016) – Chapter 3. Money and Markets

WEEK 6 (Oct 7th)

- Capitalism and Environment II

Bell and Ashwood (2016) – Chapter 3. Money and Markets (continued)

Bell and Ashwood (2016) – Chapter 2. Consumption and Materialism

The first synthetic essay due: Oct 11th Fri

IV. Feeling the Environment

WEEK 7 (Oct 14th)

- Social class and environmental consciousness

Bell and Ashwood (2016) – Chapter 7. The Ideology of Environmental Domination (Only section on “Individualism and Environmental Domination” and “Gender and Environmental Domination.”)

Bell and Ashwood (2016) – Chapter 8. The Ideology of Environmental Concern (Only section on “Social Status and Environmental Concern.”)

“We find that individuals are disposed selectively to accept or dismiss risk claims in a manner that expresses their cultural values. (...) The insensitivity to risk reflected in the white-male effect can thus be seen as a defensive response to a form of cultural identity threat that afflicts hierarchical and individualistic white males. (Kahan et al., 2007: 467)”

Mid-term exam: Oct 18th (Fri) during the class meeting

WEEK 8 (Oct 21st)

- Social construction of environment: How science matters? Whose science matters?

Kloppenborg J (1991) “Social Theory and the De/Reconstruction of Agricultural Science.” *Rural Sociology*.

Recommended: Oreskes N and Conway EM (2010) *Merchants of doubt : how a handful of scientists obscured the truth on issues from tobacco smoke to global warming*. Bloomsbury Press. (Selected chapters) – This material will be further discussed during week 9.

WEEK 9 (Oct 28th)

- More on science and environment: Science Questions in Feminism

Haraway D (1988) “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective.” *Feminist Studies*. (Warning: This is a very dense text. Give yourself enough time to unpack it. It will be a rewarding experience.)

Bell and Ashwood (2016) – Chapter 4. Technology and Science (Only sections on “Science as a Dialogue” and “Science and Technology as Political.”)

WEEK 10 (Nov 4th)

- Risk Society, reflexive modernization, and ecological modernization (Beck, 1992; Mol and Spaargaren, 2000)

Bell and Ashwood (2016) – Chapter 10. The Rationality of Risk (Only later half of the chapter— “The Sociology of Disasters”, “A risk society?”, and “Risk and Democracy”)

Bell and Ashwood (2016) – Chapter 8. The Ideology of Environmental Concern (Only section on “Three Theories of Contemporary Environmental Concern.”)

Recommended: Mol APJ and Spaargaren G (2000) Ecological modernization theory in debate: A review. *Environmental Politics* 9(1). Taylor & Francis Group: 17–49. DOI: 10.1080/09644010008414511. (Until page 25)

“These similarities [between Reflexive Modernization Theory and Ecological Modernization Theory] refer, among others, to the transformation of the old political institutions of the nation-state in environmental reforms and the emergence of new sub- and supra-national political arrangements, the new role of markets and economic actors in triggering environmental protection, and the increasing uncertainty and insecurity around environmental risks and management strategies following the changing role of science. (Mol and Spaargaren, 2000: 22)”

WEEK 11 (Nov 11th)

- Technological solutions of environmental crisis

Bell and Ashwood (2016) – Chapter 4. Technology and Science (Only sections on “Technology as a Dialogue” and “Technological Somnambulism”)

Winner L (1980) Do artifacts have politics? *Daedalus*: 121–136.

“In my best estimation, however, the social consequences of building renewable energy systems will surely depend on the specific configurations of both hardware and the social institutions created to bring that energy to us. (Winner, 1980: 135)”

V. Environmental Justice

WEEK 12 (Nov 18th)

- Anatomy of environmental justice: How Social Problems are intertwined with Environmental Justice? (Frickel and Vincent, 2007; Pellow et al., 2001)

In addition to the assigned readings, we will intensively discuss about the issue of fracking.

Bell and Ashwood (2016) – Chapter 6. Body and Justice (Sections on “Living Downstream: Invisible *Invironments*” and “The Sociology of Environmental Justice”)

Recommended: Pellow DN, Weinberg A and Schnaiberg A (2001) The environmental justice movement: Equitable allocation of the costs and benefits of environmental management outcomes. *Social Justice Research* 14(4). Springer: 423–439.

Recommended: Frickel S and Vincent MB (2007) Hurricane Katrina, contamination, and the unintended organization of ignorance. *Technology in Society* 29(2): 181–188.

“Environmental testing collapses time and space. Testing happens in geographical space, yet strips away the social history of those locations. (...) Thus, past and future are condensed into a

one-dimensional present largely devoid of social and historical context. (Frickel and Vincent, 2007: 186)”

Thanksgiving Recess Week

The second Synthetic Essay due: Dec 1st

WEEK 13 (Dec 2nd)

- Toward a food justice

MacKendrick N (2018) *Better Safe Than Sorry: How Consumers Navigate Exposure to Everyday Toxics*. Univ of California Press. (Selected chapters)

White MM (2011) Sisters of the soil: Urban gardening as resistance in Detroit. *Race/ethnicity: Multidisciplinary global contexts* 5(1). JSTOR: 13–28.

WEEK 14 (Dec 9th)

Coda – Final exam review

FINAL EXAM, Dec 16th, Location & Time: TBD