

ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIETY (SOC U246)
CLASS SCHEDULE and CONTENTS
SPRING 2006
(subject to changes as necessary)

Instructor: Lora L. Karaoglu	Meeting Place and Time: West Village Bldg H #110 M, W, Th.: 10:30-11:35am
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Course Description:

The purpose of this course is to analyze in both empirical and theoretical terms the current state of the global environment and ecological politics. Topical areas of theoretical focus include analyses of history and nature; the logic of economic growth, capitalist accumulation, and ecological degradation; the human/environmental impacts of technology; globalization and the export of environmental hazard; imperialism and the ecological destruction of the *Third World*, with a particular emphasis on Central America; the role of ecological problems in the current economic and social crisis of the United States (and other countries); social and ecological injustice; and the crisis of the labor and environmental movements.

These topics and more will be analyzed from a political-economic or class perspective in order to achieve a more "totalistic" view of the global crisis of nature. Such a view is essential, first, because of the coexistence of modern economic and ecological crisis trends and tendencies. Second, because social science and natural science have become so specialized that it has become almost impossible for most if not all students of the subject to "see the forest for the trees"; third, because social and political action against environmental destruction can be effective only when guided by a theory which develops the interrelationships and contradictions between and within capitalist economy and society and the environment. This critical approach is intended to: 1) highlight the different manners in which society and nature are linked, 2) emphasize the need for more encompassing and sophisticated interpretations of the relationship(s) between societal and environmental processes, and 3) enhance the possibility of offering effective solutions to environmental problems.

Required Readings:

Bullard, Robert (ed.). 2005. *The Quest for Environmental Justice: Human Rights and Politics of Pollution*. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books.

Humphrey, Craig R., Tammy L. Lewis, and Frederick H. Buttel. 2002. *Environment, Energy, and Society: A New Synthesis*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Articles will be posted on the SOC 246's *blackboard site*.

Course Organization & Requirements:

The course will consist of lectures, discussions, class activities, presentations, and films. Films, which provide one of the best ways to “experience” the material covered and help to understand structural aspects of capitalism and ecological crisis, are integral part of the course.

Assignments and Grading Criteria:

There will be a total of two, in-class, multiple-choice exams based upon the assigned readings, lectures, films, class discussions, and class activities. Each exam will be worth 20% of the grade.

Two 5-7-page papers will also be assigned during the semester. Each paper will be worth 20% of the grade. Participation in class activities will count toward 10% of the grade. There will be an extra credit assignment (*email copies will not be accepted*).

Attendance and Class Participation: Attendance in this course is mandatory. Excused absences will not affect your grade; however, unexcused absences will affect your grade. Those who make it to class do better than those who miss classes. Active participation is strongly encouraged and I urge you to bring newspaper articles and other readings of interest that you feel are related to our discussions. Participation will count toward 10% of the grade.

A word of advice: This class is a reading and discussion intensive course. You must keep up with the reading (complete the reading by the class date) and come to the class prepared in order to do well on the exams.

<u>Grading:</u>
2 Exams: 20% (each)
2 Papers: 20% (each)
Attendance and Participation in class activities: 10%
Active Class Participation: 10%

Missed Exams and Classes:

- There are NO make-ups for **unexcused** missed exams or late papers. If you miss an exam, you must provide me with **written** documentation in order to be eligible for taking make-ups. Make-ups and the turning of late papers are possible only after being **excused** by the instructor **prior** to the test date or due date. There will be NO “make-ups” of make-ups. I strongly encourage you to mark exam dates on your calendar as soon as possible.
- Students who miss class should get notes and announcements from students who have attended class. And remember, you *always* miss something important when you miss a class.
- Late arrivals and early leaves are disruptive for everyone in the class. *Thus, please try to arrive for class **on time** and do not walk out in the middle of class unless it is necessary. If you must leave early, please inform me before class starts. **Please do not engage in any activity that may disturb everyone in the class.***
- Students with disabilities who need disability-related classroom or testing accommodation are encouraged to see me as soon as possible.
- Taking an *incomplete* is strongly discouraged.

Academic Honesty: Academic dishonesty is defined in your university student handbook. This policy prohibits cheating on examinations, unauthorized collaborations on assignments, unauthorized access to examinations or course materials, plagiarism, and other proscribed activities. Plagiarism is defined as the use of another’s idea(s) as your own, either intentionally or unintentionally.

A Note on Sociology and the Environment:

Environmental problems have existed throughout human history. It is impossible to point to a society, past or present, and claim that it is/was free of environmental problems. Similarly, it is difficult to imagine a future society free of such problems/crises. From naturally occurring changes in atmospheric conditions to the deliberate targeting of Native American communities by the federal government for the disposal of toxic and radioactive wastes, humans have always been affected by environmental change, and always will be. However, we are not passive and entirely subject to changes in our environments; humans are active "players" in the environment in the sense that we are part of institutions. Consequently, in order to solve environmental problems, it is important that we understand how these institutions work and how our participation in them affects our thinking, our environment, and our health.

One aspect of our current environment that stands out from other historical eras is the scale and rate of change taking place. It is fair to claim that recent growing population, recent technologies, a shift toward global production, and challenges to democratic participation have increased both the types and amount of environmental crises taking place locally and globally. As the magnitude and pace of environmental change increase, the task of addressing these problems becomes more pressing and daunting. Some people believe the world has reached a "point of no return" where environmental problems can no longer be solved. Others claim that environmental problems are minimal, even non-existent, particularly when compared to environmental conditions several decades ago. But most people probably fall somewhere between the extremes, acknowledging the existence of problems and remaining skeptical, perhaps cautiously optimistic, of the future despite the magnitude and rate of changes around them. Solving any problem requires an understanding of it. We hear this everyday in congressional battles (however misguided they may be) where one side claims that "throwing money at the problem" is no solution, the implication being that the money is spent unwisely. To acquire an understanding of any problem is therefore requisite to fixing the problem. This class is intended to provide you with the necessary "tools" to better understand environmental problems and I urge you to take the materials seriously.

*****PART I Class Schedule, Themes, and Readings: Environment & Society**

WEEK 1:

January 9 (M) – Introduction to Environmental Sociology

Film: "Crisis in the Atmosphere" or "Taken for a ride"

January 10 (W) – The Nature of Ecological Crises

Article #1: "Environmental Problems" by R. Scott Frey in Environment and Society Reader, ed., by Scott Frey. 2001

Class Activity: What is "The Environment" to you ?

January 11 (Th) – Environmental Sociology as a Discipline

Humphrey Book, Chapter 1

WEEK 2:

January 16 (M)—University Closed—Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday observed

January 18 (W) – The Political Economy of Nature

Nature of Social Theory

Humphrey Book, Chapter 2

January 19 (Th) – Capital, Nature and Society

Article #2: Joel Kovel, "Capital" (Chpt 3) in *The Enemy of Nature* (New York, NY 2002)

WEEK 3:

January 23 (M)— Capitalist Accumulation and Ecological Crisis:

Methodology: Micro-Quantitative Analyses of Capitalist Accumulation

Externality Theory & Environmental Justice: Social and Ecological Cost of Capital Accumulation

Handout- F. Beckenbach: Social costs in modern capitalism, 1994 (pp.86-87)

January 25 (W)— Capitalist Accumulation and Economic Crisis (cont'd)

External and Social Barriers: The Dialectic of Economic and Ecological Crises

Article #3: J. O'Connor, "The Second Contradiction of Capitalism," Chpt 8 in *Natural Causes*

January 26 (Th) – Case Studies of Environmental Injustice:

Environmental Hazards, Class and Environmental Racism

Article # 4: Daniel Faber and Eric Krieg, "Unequal Exposure to Ecological Hazards: Environmental Injustices in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts" *Environmental Health Perspectives*, Vol 1101 Supplement, April 2002 **BLACKBOARD ONLINE**

Bullard Book, Chapter 1

Film: "Laid to Waste: A Chester Neighborhood's Fights for Its Future" (1996, 52min; MV7-7329) or Toxic Racism (Video Project, 1994, 56min.)

WEEK 4:

January 30 (M) – Environmental Injustices

Bullard Book, Chapter 2

Film: Erin Brockovich (DV8-0240)

February 1 (W) – Environmental Injustices (cont'd)

Bullard Book, Chapter 3 and 4

Film: Erin Brockovich (continued)

Class Activity/Discussion – Environmental Justice

February 2 (Th) – Environmental Injustices: Land Rights

Native American Culture and Resource Colonization

Bullard Book, Chapter 8

Film: "Radioactive Reservations" (Snell Media code: MV7-7021; 50min.) or In the Light of Reverence: Protecting America's Sacred Lands (75 min, 2001, Bullfrog Films, MV7-7687)

WEEK 5:

February 6 (M) – Environmental Injustice:

Bullard Book, Chapters 5 and 6

February 8 (W) — Environmental Injustice:

Occupational/Community Health & Safety

Bullard Book, Chapter 9

Film: “Can’t Take No More” MP3-0236 or “Those Who Know Don’t Tell: The Ongoing Battle For Workers’ Health” (MV 7-2306, 29 min.) or “The Golden Cage: A Story of California’s Farm workers” (29min.)

February 9 (Th) – Methodology: Macro-Quantitative Analyses

Article #5 : Eliza Darling, “The *Lorax* Redux: Profit Bigging and Some Selective Silences in American Environmentalism,” *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism*, Vol 12, No. 4 (December 2002) : 51-68

Film: “The Lorax” or “Politics, People, and Pollution” (30min.)

WEEK 6:

February 13 (M) – Methodology: Technology and Qualitative Analyses

Article # 6 : J. O’Connor, Chpt 11, “Technology and Ecology,” in *Natural Causes*

Article# 7 : Alan Schnaiberg and Kenneth Alan Gould, Chpt 4, “Treadmill Predispositions and Social Responses: Population, Consumption, and Technological Change,” pp. 68-91 in *Environment and Society: The Enduring Conflict* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1994)

Film: *Not for Sale* (31 min. Bullfrog Films)

February 15 (W) – Methodology: Combined & Uneven Development

Article# 8 : J. O’Connor, “Uneven and Combined Development and Ecological Crisis,” Chpt 10 in *Natural Causes* (pp. 187-199)

Film: “Controlling Interest: The World of the Multinational Corporation” (MV7-4213) (40min.) or “The Money Lenders” or “Bill Moyers Reports: NAFTA’s Powerful Little Secret – PBS, January, 2002) “The Poisoned Dream: The Love Canal Nightmare” 51min. (MV7-7322)

February 16 (Th) — Methodology: Politics of Green Consumerism

Article# 9 : Michael Mayerfeld Bell, “Consumption and Materialism,” Chpt 2 in *An Invitation to Environmental Sociology* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press, 1998), pp.35-50

WEEK 7:

February 20 (M)—Presidents’ Day, No classes

February 22 (W) — Methodology: Politics of Green Consumerism (cont’d)

Article# 9 : finish reading (51-64)

Humphrey Book, Chapter 3- population, resource consumption, and environment (pp. 70-78)

Film: Advertising & the End of the World, featuring Sut Jhally (46 min.) (Snell Library MV7-6383) or “Toxic Sludge is Good For You: The Public Relations Industry Unspun (45 min. (Snell Library MV7-7998)

February 23 (Th)– Class Choice: What do you want to learn about?

Evaluation and REVIEW of materials and discussion

WEEK 8:

February 27 (M) – EXAM #1 IN-CLASS EXAM (multiple choice)

Methodologies in the Political Economy of Nature

****PART II Class Schedule, Themes and Readings:**

Environment & Society

March 1 (W) – The Globalization of Capital and Ecological Crises in the Third World:

The Globalization of Poverty and Ecological Crisis

Article # 10 : Joshua Karliner, Chpt 1, “The Corporate Planet: Environment and the Crisis of Globalization,” in *The Corporate Planet: Ecology and Politics in the Age of Globalization* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1997).

Bullard Book, Chapter 14

Film: “Global Village or Global Pillage? (Snell Media Center code MV7-7701)

March 2 (Th) – Imperialism, Dependency, and “Third World” Development

Article #11 : Michael Albert, “A Q&A on the WTO, IMF, World Bank, and Activism,” (culled from the work by Brecher, Weismann, et al.)

Article # 12 : A. Rowel, “Welcome to Wal-World: Wal-Mart’s Inexhaustible March to Conquer the Globe,” in *Multinational Monitor*, October 2003 and Corporate Watch-“Who Owns the WTO?” www.corpwatch.org **ONLINE**

Film: “Borderline Cases” (MV7-7686) or “Global Environmental Change- Global Trade Debate” (MV7-7931) (30min); Forgive us our debt (H6389.5.F69, 2004)

*****1st PAPER DUE TODAY!!!*****

WEEK 9:

March 4-12—SPRING BREAK!

WEEK 10:

March 13 (M) – The Export of Ecological Hazards

Article# 13 : Karliner, J. Chpt 5: Toxic Empire in *Corporate Planet*, 1997.

Article# 14 : Daniel Faber, Chpt 3, “Poisoning for Profit,” in *Environment Under Fire : Imperialism and the Ecological Crisis in Central America* (NY: 1993), pp. 83-117.

Film: “Global Dumping Ground” or “Pesticides: For Export Only” or “Environment Under Fire: Politics and Ecology in Central America” (MV7-2297) (25min)

March 15 (W) — The Global Destruction of Woodlands and Rainforests

Article# 15 : Daniel Faber, Chpt 4, “Revolution in the Rainforest,” in *Environment Under Fire*, pp. 117-148.

March 16 (Th) – Global Warming, Greenhouse Effect and Energy

Humphrey Book, Chapter 5

Film: What’s up with the weather? (MV7-7321)

WEEK 11:

March 20 (M) – Agriculture (Global Food Production) and Genetically Modified Food

Article# 16 : “Genetically Manipulated Food.... “ and “Different Takes.. “

Humphrey Book, Chapter 4/

Continue watching “What’s up with the weather?”—(MV7-7321)

March 22 (W) – Human Rights and Global Environmental Justice

Bullard Book, Chapter 11 (Latin American Case)

(Note: Lecture based on the case of political ecology of Nicaragua: EJ and Sustainable Development))

Film: Globalization: Winners and Losers” (40min) (MV7-7494)

March 23 (Th) – Human Rights and Global Environmental Justice (cont’d)

Bullard Book, Chapter 12 and Chapter 13 (cases from Latin America and Africa)

WEEK 12:

March 27 (M) – Human Rights and Global Environmental Justice (cont’d)

Bullard Book, Chapter 10

Brownfields Redevelopment (online Journal- Pasific Institute Report www.pacinst.org)

Film: Holding Ground: Dudley Square (MV7-5829)

March 29 (W) – History of the Environmental Movement, Grassroots Activism

Humphrey Book, Chapter 6 (pp.175-180)

March 30 (Th) – Environmental Movements (cont’d)

Humphrey Book, Chapter 6 (pp.181-220)

WEEK 13:

April 3 (M) – Linking Environmental Justice with Sustainability

Humphrey Book, Chapter 7

Online : Corporate Watch- “Who Owns the WTO?” www.corpwatch.org

Indicators of (un)sustainability

Article# 17 : Duncan McLaren, “Environmental Space, Equity, and Ecological Debt” in *Just Sustainabilities*, 2003

Class Activity: Consumption/Footprints www.redefiningprogress.org and online “Eating up the Earth” www.redefiningprogress.org/articles

April 5 (W) – Linking Environmental Justice with Sustainability (cont’d)

Article# 18 : W. Rees & Laura Westra, “When Consumption Does Violence: Can There be Sustainability and Environmental Justice in a Resource-limited World?” In *Just Sustainabilities* (2003) --Continue discussion (about Footprints class activities)

April 6 (Th) – Global Poverty, Pollution and Human Rights

Bullard Book, Chapter 14

Film: “Trade Secrets” (Part I) Bill Moyers documentary

WEEK 14:

April 10 (M) – Sustainability, Precautionary Principles and EJ (cont’d)

Article # 19 : Paul Hawken, “A Declaration of Sustainability” in *Environment & Society* Reader, 2001 and online www.redefiningprogress.org (see blackboard) on Precautionary

Film: “Trade Secrets” (MV7-7705) (Part II) – Bill Moyers documentary

April 12 (W) – REVIEW The second part of the class materials will be reviewed.

April 13 (Th) – IN-CLASS EXAM #2 (multiple choice)

Globalization and solutions to the ecological crisis. Exam on Part II materials

WEEK 15:

April 17 (M)- University Closed Patriots’ Day

April 19 — Last Day of the Class -- 2nd PAPER DUE TODAY !!!!

Have a nice summer!!!