

INTRODUCTION TO COMMUNITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL SOCIOLOGY
Community and Environmental Sociology / Sociology 140

FALL, 2016

Instructor

Michael M. Bell (michaelbell@wisc.edu)

Teaching Assistants

Daniel Bornstein (email)

Abigail Letak (letak@wisc.edu)

Sections

302 – Th: 4:30-5:45, 38 Ag Hall

303 – F: 1-2:15, 38 Ag Hall

304 – F: 2:30-3:45, 38 Ag Hall

305 – F: 2:30-3:45, 10 Ag Hall

306 – Th: 4:30-5:45, 10 Ag Hall

307 – Th: 3-4:15, 357 Soils

Lecture

Mo 4:00-5:15 180 Science Hall

Can't we get along better with each other and the world? Yes, we can. We can live with a greater togetherness of person, people, and planet. We know we can because we often have, and still do, in various ways in various places.

The study of community and environmental sociology seeks to understand what makes for that greater togetherness and what stands in its way. In this introductory course, we take up that understanding and apply it to the issues that pain us as well to cultivating the many deep pleasures of social and ecological life.

Each week of the course will begin with a lecture on Monday, introducing the week's focus and sketching its social and ecological context. For the second class session, each student will attend a discussion section to develop their own responses, in dialogue with others in *muddle groups*, based on their weekly 100-word *muddle post*. Students will also develop their skills in public scholarship through writing over the course of the semester three 600-800 word *blog posts*, the first two of which will be based on assigned course books and the third of which will be an open topic. The course will also include a midterm exam and a final exam, each with an in-class and a take-home component.

COURSE ORGANIZATION

Student Evaluation

Your grade for this course will be based on the following: the weekly muddle posts (10%), the three blog posts (30%), the midterm (20%), the final (20%), and class participation (20%), with deductions for unexcused absences.

Muddle Groups

Each *muddle group* will be comprised of 3 or 4 students, who are expected to read each other's muddle posts (see below) before section and to "muddle through" them together. Each section will begin with a meeting of the muddles, who will afterwards bring issues for discussion forward to the entire section. We will periodically re-organize into new muddle groups over the course of the semester.

Weekly Muddle Posts

The point of the weekly *muddle posts* is to give you a chance to develop your own views on the readings and lectures, to communicate those views to the class, to demonstrate your command of the week's material, and to keep you up-to-date in the course. The format is simple: Write a critical appraisal of around 100 words (longer is just fine; shorter is not) of the week's readings and lecture, and post the result to your muddle group (see above) by **Tuesday midnight** on your group's Google Group, which your TA will set up. **Late muddle posts will not be counted.**

In your muddle post, it is important to develop *one theme or argument*, rather than a scatter of observations. (100 words isn't much room.) Also, it is important to give *evidence* for your theme or argument and to explain your *reasoning*, rather than offering opinion. You are welcome to craft your own muddle post as a response to the post of one of your muddle group members, or to write on a different theme.

Here's a nice thing: You only need to complete 10 muddle posts over the course of the semester. Or you can do more and we will drop your lowest grades.

Blog Posts

You will also have a chance to develop your skills in *public scholarship* through writing three *blog posts* in the range of 600 to 800 words. By public scholarship I mean writing that is written in a publically accessible style but is informed and documented by academic findings, concepts, and debates. In each blog post, you are expected to provide at least five academic sources, ideally by hyperlinks. The TAs and I welcome including visual material in the blog posts as well, but that is not required.

The first two blog posts should launch from the findings, concepts, and debates in the two topical books we will read (see below). The third blog post is open to any topic in community and environmental sociology.

Readings

In most weeks, there will be both primary and secondary sources to read, of varying difficulty. We will have a course textbook (co-authored by me!) and two topical books, one of them the Go Big Read book for this year. You should expect to put in 3-4 hours each week doing the course readings, and to complete the readings by Tuesday night when you submit your muddle post. Plan for it.

We will have a class vote in the middle of the semester on a place to donate the royalties from my textbook.

Midterm and Final Exams

The midterm and final will each consist of in-class *identifications* and take-home *essays*, based on the readings and lectures. For the take-home component, we encourage you to meet and discuss the questions with others; the only constraint is that you must put your answers *in your own words*. Note that the final exam will be *cumulative*, although it will emphasize the second half of the course.

Class Participation

Your grade for class participation will not be a measure of how loud you were, or of how often you spoke. Rather, it will reflect the extent to which you were "there." We will evaluate your "thereness" based on our subjective assessment of your engagement, including the quality of your

listening, in muddles and class discussions. If things don't seem to us to be going well for you in this area, we will let you know.

Attendance

Attendance will be taken daily in lecture and section. You may miss two lectures and two section meetings. Think of it as four chits, two of each type. No excuse or explanation needed; just don't show up, and we'll deduct the chit. However, additional absences will not be excused, except in exceptional circumstances. Each absence beyond two chits each *will lower your final grade by 2 points*. If you are late to lecture or section by more than 10 minutes, you will be considered absent for the day.

Electronic Devices

You'll want to bring a paper notebook for keeping notes in during class. Ordinarily, we prohibit electronic devices, such as laptops, phones, or tablets during lecture and discussion section. If a student has particular needs that require her or him to use an electronic device, she or he must discuss it with a TA prior to class. If a student uses an electronic device during class without permission, that student will receive a zero for participation and attendance for that class meeting. We recognize it may seem terribly autocratic to make this rule, but laptops and cells can easily get out of hand in a lecture course, distracting you and others.

Plagiarism and Academic Misconduct

While some of the readings will be difficult or unfamiliar, your muddle posts, your blog posts, and the essays for the take-home portion of your exams must be uniquely yours, in your own words, with sources documented. Any form of cheating or plagiarism is absolutely unacceptable and intolerable in this class and in the entire UW System. We expect you to familiarize yourself with your rights and duties as a UW student, and about the consequences of cheating at: www.wisc.edu/students/saja/misconduct/UWS14.html. We will not accept lack of knowledge regarding these guidelines as an excuse.

Every year, instructors in our department catch students committing plagiarism. It is an immensely uncomfortable experience for all concerned, and can affect a student's career for years afterwards, even permanently. It's not worth it. Really.

In order to help guard you against temptation, all three blog posts and your exam essays must be submitted through turnitin.com. TAs will explain in section how to set up your account for this course in turnitin.com.

Course Books

- Bell, Michael M. and Loka Ashwood. 2016. *An Invitation to Environmental Sociology*. 5th edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press (Sage).
- Carolan, Michael. 2011. *The Real Cost of Cheap Food*. London and New York: Earthscan.
- Desmond, Matthew. 2016. *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*. New York: Crown Publishers.

Getting Ahold of the Books and Readings

The Bell/Ashwood and Carolan books are available at A Room of One's Own, 315 West Gorham Street. The Desmond book is free with a coupon voucher, courtesy of Go Big Read. The other readings will all be available on the password-protected "materials" tab at the course site: <http://www.michaelmbell.net/CES-140/home.html>

COURSE SCHEDULE AND LIST OF READINGS

(All readings subject to change. Check the course website for the latest news!
As well, the course site contains links to supplemental materials.)

Week 1 (9/8-9): Introduction

Meet in sections to learn about the course. No lecture. No readings.

COMMUNITIES

Week 2 (9/12, 9/15-16): Of Surfaces and Boundaries

The three central issues of community (togetherness, difference, fairness). The three central issues of environmentalism (sustainability, beauty, environmental justice). The three axes of social and environmental life (material-ideal, group-self, power-possibility). The environmental sociological imagination.

Secondary source: C. Wright Mills, "The Sociological Imagination."

Primary source: Any episode of the show "Community."

Week 3 (9/19, 9/22-23): Of Trust and Solidarity

Togetherness. Dialogue of solidarities. Social capital. Knowledge cultivation.

Secondary source: Bell, Michael M. 1998. "The Dialogue of Solidarities, or Why the Lion Spared Androcles," *Sociological Focus*, 31(2):181-199.

Primary source: TBA

Week 4 (9/26, 9/29-30): Of Hate and Hard-Heartedness

Social division. Difference. Conflict. Power. Economic inequality. Dialogue.

Source: Desmond, Matthew. 2016. *Evicted*.

Blog 1 thesis statement muddle post option.

Week 5 (10/3, 10/6-7): Of Humans and the Land

Holons. Narratives. The ecology of contexts. How forests think. Sociology of animals. Actor network theory.

Secondary source: Leopold, Aldo. 1961 (1949). "The Land Ethic," in *A Sand County Almanac*. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books. Pp. 237-264.

Primary sources: Potter, Beatrix. *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* and *The Tale of Benjamin Bunny*.

Blog 1 due, 10/7, 5pm.

SITUATIONS

Week 6 (10/10, 10/13-14): **Of Consumption and Materialism**

Affluence and needs. Consumption and community. Treadmill of consumption.

Secondary source: Bell and Ashwood, chapter 2.

Primary source: UW-Madison football advertising and paraphernalia, leading up to the Buckeyes game on Oct. 15th.

Week 7 (10/17, 10/20-21): **Of Money and Machines**

Wage-price gap. Treadmill of production. Neoliberalism. The how-to and have-to of technology. The social organization of convenience.

Secondary source: Bell and Ashwood, portions of chapters 3 and 4.

Primary source: TBA

Week 8 (10/24, 10/27-28): **Midterm exam**

No lecture. No reading. No muddle post.

Week 9 (10/31, 11/3-4): **Of Place and Presence**

Ghosts of place. Territory. Nationalism. Race and ethnicity.

Secondary source: Bell, Michael M. 1997. "The Ghosts of Place," *Theory and Society*. 26:813-836.

Primary source: TBA

Week 10 (11/7, 11/10-11): **Of the City and the Country**

Pagan and bourgeois. Agriculture and food. Farmer's problem. The environment.

Source: Carolan, Michael. 2011. *The Real Cost of Cheap Food*.

Blog 2 thesis statement muddle post option.

Week 11 (11/14, 11/17-18): **Of Environment and Development**

International development. Environmental apartheid. Population.

Secondary source: Bell and Ashwood, chapter 5.

Primary source: TBA.

Blog 2 due, 11/18, 5pm.

Week 12 (11/21, no sections): **Of Nature and Domination**

Religion, gender, and body imagery and environmental domination. Links between social and environmental domination.

Secondary source: Bell and Ashwood, Chapter 7

Primary source: None.

Blog 3 thesis statement muddle post option for weeks 12 and 13.

RECONFIGURATIONS

Week 13 (11/28, 12/1-2): **Of Nature and the Good**

Ambivalence of nature. First, second, and third nature. Natural conscience. Social construction of nature. Racism. Absolutism.

Secondary source: Bell and Ashwood, portions of Chapters 8 and 9.

Primary source: TBA.

Week 14 (12/5, 12/8-9): **Of the Strange and the Possible**

Strangency. Social movements. Normal environmentalism.

Secondary source: Bell and Ashwood, portions of Chapters 11, 12, and 13.

Primary source: TBA.

Week 15 (12/12, no sections): **Of Justice and Democracy**

Isodemocracy. Environmental governance. Justice and value. The top and bottom of change.

No reading

Blog 3 due, 12/12, 5pm.

Week 16 (12/21): **Final Exam**

In-class component: *December 21, 7:25-9:25pm*. Essay portion due at the start of the in-class component.