Overview

How can we best care for the Earth and all its peoples and living things? The current situation is worrisome, at the very least. Climate change. Air pollution. Threats to land and water. Habitat and species loss. Great social differences in the distribution of the good and bad things of life. And more. There is plenty to be gloomy about.

But there is potential for hope – especially if we better understand the factors behind our current patterns of human-environmental interactions and their social inequalities. With that potential in mind, this course provides a global perspective on the sociology of environmental stewardship and social justice, with an eye for the roots and routes of positive change.

The course will proceed through three sections:

**People:** The cultures of stewardship around the world and through time

**Power:** The economic, social organizational, and political factors behind the challenges of environmental stewardship and social justice

**Possibility:** The potential for social movements and better governance to lead to a greener and more just world.

The general pattern of the course will be a lecture on Monday, weekly posts by students by midnight Wednesday, and active learning exercises and discussions in sections on Thursday and Friday.
Learning Objectives

- Develop students’ critical thinking about community and environmental sociology.
- Develop students’ understanding of both the ideological and the material factors behind human-environmental relations and their social inequalities.
- Develop students’ capacity for contextual understanding about environmental stewardship and social justice, especially global perspectives.
- Develop students’ appreciation of the origins and patterns of human power relations, and their consequences for sustainability.
- Develop students’ capacity for critical imagination of future possibilities for socio-ecological relations.
- Develop students’ oral and written communication skills.

Undergraduate Student Evaluation
Your grade for this course will be based on the following: class participation (25%), the weekly posts on Canvas (25%), the midterm (25%), the final (25%), with deductions for unexcused absences.

Graduate Student Evaluation
Your grade for this course will be based on the following: class participation (25%), the weekly posts on Canvas (25%), the midterm (12.5%), the final (12.5%), and final paper (25%), with deductions for unexcused absences.

Weekly Post
The point of the weekly post 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 150 words (about half a double spaced page – longer is just fine; shorter is not) of the week’s readings and lecture, and post the result Wednesday midnight via Discussion Forum on Canvas, which your TA will set up weekly. Late posts will not be counted. In your weekly post, it is important to develop one theme or argument, rather than a scatter of observations. (150 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. Each entry will be graded on a 10-point scale, with 4 for content, 4 for analysis, and 2 for writing.

Midterm and Final Exams
For undergraduate students, 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.

For graduate students, the midterm will consist of in-class identification and a roughly 250 word proposal for your final paper (your proposal will not be graded); and the final will consist of in-class identification and your final paper, which will be a work of public scholarship (see next section).
Public Scholarship Project (for Graduate Students only)
Each graduate student will prepare a written work of public scholarship in the area of environmental stewardship and social justice – a communication piece that is scientifically informed and documented but oriented toward a public audience, rather than a professional or specialist one. The work must be prepared with a specific communication venue in mind, including the internet. The work should be in the range of 2000 to 2500 words (approximately 8-10 pages). Students may also prepare two shorter works that equal this approximate length. The first draft of your public scholarship will be due on April 18th, three weeks before the final exam date. The final draft will be due at the time of the in-class portion of the final exam on May 9th.

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 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.

Grading
We will translate your average for the course into grades using the following equivalences: 92 and above = A; 87 to 91.9 = AB; 82 to 86.9 = B; 77 to 81.9 = BC; 70 to 76.9 = C; 60 to 69.9 = D; below 60 = E.

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 course, distracting you and others. Indeed, educational research shows that electronic devices typically undermine student learning. (For a summary of that research, see here.)

Plagiarism and Academic Misconduct
All writing in the course 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.
**Work Load and Credit Hours**

This course requires 3 credit hours of work. Under UW-Madison’s guidelines that means, in addition to our two 75 minute class sessions a week, you can expect an average minimum of 6 hours a week of work outside of class. In this course, that will mainly entail the weekly readings and writing assignments. As well, the Midterm and Final include a significant additional writing component.

**Required Books**


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**COURSE SCHEDULE AND LIST OF READINGS**

*Note that readings are always subject change a week ahead of time.*

**Week 1 (1/25, 1/26): Introduction**

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

**PART I: People**

**Lecture 1 (1/29): Cultures of Stewardship I: The Invention of Nature**

*Secondary Source*


*Primary Sources*


**Lecture 2 (2/05): Cultures of Stewardship II: Nature before Nature**

*Secondary Source*


*Primary Source*

Lecture 3 (2/12): Cultures of Stewardship III: Nature and the Universalist Religions

Secondary Source

Primary Sources
Passages from the Old Testament, New Testament, Qur’an, and the Buddhist canon to be assigned and posted electronically.

Lecture 4 (2/19): Cultures of Stewardship IV: Materialism

Secondary Source
Bell and Ashwood, Chapter 2, “Consumption and Materialism,” pp. 49-77.

Primary Source
Mini-ethnography of a store conducted by each student.

Part II: Power

Lecture 5 (2/26) Patterns of Power I: Inequality and the Environment

Secondary Source

Primary Sources
To be assigned electronically.

Lecture 6 (3/05) Patterns of Power III: Economic Growth

Secondary Source

Primary Sources
To be assigned electronically.

Lecture 7 (3/12) Patterns of Power II: Local Struggles

Readings to be assigned.

In-class Midterm Exam (3/19)

Essay Portion of Midterm Exam Due 3/24

*Essays workshops in discussion sections*

Spring Break (3/24–4/01)
Lecture 8 (4/02) Patterns of Power IV: Hunger and Health

Secondary Source

Primary Sources
To be assigned electronically.

Part III: Possibility

Lecture 9 (4/09): Conditions of Change I: Conceptions

Secondary Source

Primary Sources
To be assigned electronically.

*There will be no discussion sessions for this week.

Lecture 10 (4/16): Conditions of Change II: Connections

Secondary Source

Primary Sources
To be assigned electronically.

*Discussion sessions this week will cover topics from lectures 9 & 10.

Lecture 11 (4/23): Conditions of Change III: Contestations

Secondary Sources

A reading to TBA.

Primary Sources
To be assigned electronically.

Lecture 12 (4/30): Conditions of Change IV: (Re-)Configurations

No readings.

Final Exam: May 9th, 7:45-9:45 AM

Nota bene: That’s in the morning!