

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

FALL, 2018 – 3 CREDITS

Instructor

Michael M. Bell (michaelbell@wisc.edu)

Lecture

Mo 4:00-5:15 212 Animal Science

Teaching Assistants

Isaac Leslie (ileslie2@wisc.edu)
– sections 301, 303, & 305

Sections

301 – Th: 4:30-5:45, 207 Van Hise
302 – F: 1-2:15, 1125 Nancy Nicholas

Laura Hanson Schlachter (lhanson4@wisc.edu)
– sections 302, 304, & 306

303 – F: 2:30-3:45, 38 Ag Hall
304 – Th: 3-4:15, 357 Soils
305 – Th: 3-4:15, 350 Birge

306 – Th: 4:30-5:45, 1510 Microbial Sciences

How can we get along better with each other and the planet? The central task of the study of community and environmental sociology is answering this question.

Each week in this introductory course, we take up a different dimension of what stands in the way of greater togetherness, and how we might turn it into a point of connection and belongingness with one another. First we begin with dimensions rooted more in what sociologists call “material” factors, then moving on to “ideal” factors, and concluding the course on “practical” issues of positive change. As well, we will apply each week’s intellectual “background” to a “foreground” topic to focus our collective learning.

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 community and environmental relations.
- Develop students’ appreciation of the origins and patterns of human power relations, as well as of sources of mutual affection and concern.
- Develop students’ capacity for critical imagination of future possibilities for socio-ecological relations.
- Develop students’ oral and written communication skills.

COURSE ORGANIZATION

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%), and the final (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 to 250 words (and longer is just fine) 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 to 250 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. Note that you need to complete only 10 posts over the course of the semester, out of the 13 course modules.

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

Attendance

Showing up is 90% of success in life! And it is also part of your participation grade in section, so we will be taking attendance at section meetings. But, hey, stuff comes up, so we will allow two misses of section, no questions asked. However, additional absences will only be excused with permission of your TA, and only if you discuss the circumstances with your TA. If you are having an issue, do let us know! Stay in communication! Don't suffer in silence! But please do, do, do your best to attend each section (and lecture). And note that each unexcused absence from section will lower your final grade by 2 points. Plus, if you are late to section by more than 10 minutes, you will be considered absent for the day. Honor your classmates by being prompt.

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 them to use an electronic device, they 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. We will not accept lack of knowledge regarding [the university 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.

Anxiety and the Blues

Sometimes things get out of control in one's life. It happens to all of us. Emails unanswered. Assignment deadlines missed. Personal relationships frayed. Stuff starts to swirl into a vortex in which you feel trapped. If you are feeling this way and it is interfering with your performance in the class, let us know!!! Reach out to your TA or Professor Bell. We are here to help you succeed.

Required Book

Bell, Michael M. and Loka Ashwood. 2016. *An Invitation to Environmental Sociology*. 5th edition. Los Angeles and London: Sage.

COURSE SCHEDULE AND LIST OF READINGS

(All readings subject to change. Check the course website for the latest news and links!)

Introduction (9/6-7)

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

Reading: The course syllabus, UW-Madison's [guidelines on plagiarism](#), and [this article](#) on how electronics can interfere with learning.

1) Community (9/10, 9/13-14)

Togetherness. Belonginess. Fairness. Ecological dialogue. Overview of the ecological and social troubles of our world.

Background: Bell and Ashwood, chapter 1.

Foreground: **declining trust** – sources TBA

The Material

2) Stuff (9/17, 9/20-21)

Materialism. Hierarchy of needs. Original affluent society. The leisure class. Advertising and the social creation of needs. Treadmill of consumption. Goods and spirit. Classical and ecological bodies. Inverted quarantine.

Background: Bell and Ashwood, chapter 2.

Foreground: **the water bottle** – sources TBA

3) Money (9/24, 9/27-28)

Treadmill of production. Wage-price gap and the problem of the original capitalist. Why capitalist economies grow. Class and competitive culture. The “Protestant ethic.” Neoliberalism.

Background: Bell and Ashwood, chapter 3.

Foreground: **anxiety** – sources TBA

4) Machines (10/1, 10/4-5)

Technology as a how-to and a have-to. The social organization of convenience. Jevons paradox. STS and actor network theory. Naturalistic fallacy.

Background: Bell and Ashwood, chapter 4.

Foreground: **the air conditioner** – sources TBA

5) **Space** (10/8, 10/11-12)

Origin of global inequality. Colonialism and neocolonialism. Rural versus urban; pagan versus bourgeois. Environmental apartheid. Population and “feeding the world.” Malthusianism.

Background: Bell and Ashwood, chapter 5.

Foreground: **fair trade** – sources TBA

6) **Health** (10/15, 10/18-19)

The body and the environment. Environmental justice. Risk society. Food security and food sovereignty. Utilitarianism, fairness, pluralism, and the sociology of justice.

Background: Bell and Ashwood, chapter 6.

Foreground: **lead in water** – sources TBA

Midterm (10/22, 10/25-27)

No lecture. No reading. No blog post.

The Ideal

7) **Nature** (10/29, 11/1-2)

Natural conscience and collective conscience. Contradictions of nature. Social construction of nature. Non-political politics.

Background: Bell and Ashwood, pp. 220-234 of chapter 8 and pp. 252-278 of chapter 9.

Foreground: **national parks** – sources TBA

8) **Heritage** (11/5, 11/8-9)

Heritage and habitus. Family and kinship. Ghosts of place. Social imagination of blood ties. Race and place. Nationalism. Localism. Indigenous rights. Cultural appropriation.

Background: TBA

Foreground: **Indian mounds** – sources TBA

9) **Sex** (11/12, 11/15-16)

Gender, sex, and power. Sexual pluralism. LGBTQI primer. Sociology of desire. Queer theory and trans theory. Ecofeminism.

Background: Sources TBA

Foreground: **environmental concern and the white male effect** – sources TBA

10) Religion (11/19, no sections)

Religion and non-political politics. Pagan and bourgeois religions. Electrum religions. Agnosticism and atheism. Greening religion.

Background: Pages TBA from Bell (2018)

Foreground: **Albert Einstein on religion** – sources TBA

11) Nonhumans (11/26, 11/29-30)

Nonhuman consciousness. The green fire of presence. Ecological and classical conceptions of the body. One health.

Background: Bell and Ashwood, pp. 206-210 of Chapter 7, and other sources TBA.

Foreground: **Aldo Leopold and wolf consciousness** – sources TBA

The Practical

12) Movements (12/3, 12/6-7)

The “three cons” of social movements: Conceptions, connections, and contestations. Knowledge cultivation. Double politics.

Background: Bell and Ashwood, Chapter 11.

Foreground: **TBA** – sources TBA

13) Governance (12/10, no sections)

Participatory governance. Grounded knowledge. The top and bottom of change. The environmental sociological imagination. Normal environmentalism. Isodemocracy.

Background: Bell and Ashwood, Chapters 12 and 13.

Foreground: **TBA** – sources TBA

Final Exam (12/17)

In-class component: *December 17, 7:45am-9:45am* – that’s **in the morning!** Essay portion due at the start of the in-class component.