

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

Spring 2019

Instructor: June Jeon	Classroom: 10 Agricultural Hall
Office: 308 Agricultural Hall	Class Time: MWF 1:20 – 2:10 PM
Email: jjeon24@wisc.edu	Office Hours: MWF 2:10 – 3 PM or by appointment
Credits: 3 (Application of the credit hour: Students are expected to invest 9-hour per week in average throughout the semester)	Time management expectation: 1) 3 hours – class 2) 3 hours – reading 3) 3 hours – assignment per week

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces students to the sociological perspective as a tool for elucidating the myriad relationships between environment and society. In the era of Anthropocene, we live in a society where humans’ activities constitute major geophysical mechanisms of the planet. Modern environmental problems, such as climate change, environmental health, resource scarcity, and biodiversity, cannot be adequately explained and resolved without a deep reflection of how human society (and our very notion of it) is both embedded in, and constantly changing, geophysical settings of earth environment. In this context, the course aims to provoke our common assumptions on the solid boundary between human society and geophysical nature to clarify how seemingly “environmental” problems can be also interpreted as deeply “social” problems, and vice versa.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This course will engage with both classic and ongoing discussions (either theoretical or empirical contributions) on environmental problems within sociological and historical traditions. This course provides a chance to practice an informed conversation in the classroom setting. Additionally, the course aims to improve students’ academic writing skills.

Students who complete the course requirements are expected to learn how to:

1. Explain the complicated relationship between environment and society
2. Apply various sociological concepts to understand and describe current environmental problems
3. Analyze various factors that constitute the pattern how human society impacts the environment

4. Communicate with their academic or non-academic audiences to share their learning experience in the classroom

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. 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.

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. Synthetic essays (300 pts = 70 * 2 + 80 * 2)

You will write four 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 both electronically (via Canvas) and in hard copy format (in class). The detail of the assignment will be announced in the lecture.

4. Midterm exam (200 pts)

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

5. Final exam (200 pts)

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

6. Final Paper (200 pts)

The term paper is due on the same date with the final exam. You can submit the term paper whenever you feel like to submit at any moment during the semester. I welcome any topic area you choose to write as long as it fits in the realm of environmental sociology. You may want to consult me to decide your topic of the paper. Followings are possible examples:

- a. In-depth review of the assigned book: You may choose to read the **entire part** of one of assigned books for the class, and write a deep review of it.
- b. In-depth review of external materials: You may choose to conduct an in-depth review of external materials that are not covered in the class, such as movies, books, or, etc. However, it is required to make a clear connection how your chosen materials resonate with course contents.
- c. Topical analysis: You may choose to write about your choice of certain narrow topic (such as a particular environmental issue) with clear emphasis on how the topic can be deeply interpreted in light of our course contents.
- d. And many more!

The paper should be no longer than 5 double-spaced pages, at maximum, excluding the bibliography. It should be formatted with Times New Roman, 12pt, 1-inch margins, APA style. It should be submitted via both Canvas page and hardcopy.

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 students so often. Your use of laptops, tablet pcs, 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. 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

Bell M (1994) *Childerley : nature and morality in a country village*. University of Chicago Press.

Cronon, W. (1983/2003). *Changes in the land: Indians, colonists, and the ecology of New England*. New York: Hill and Wang. (ISBN: 9780809001583)

Oreskes, N., & Conway, E. M. (2012). *Merchants of doubt: How a handful of scientists obscured the truth on issues from tobacco smoke to global warming*. London: Bloomsbury. (ISBN: 9781608193943)

Schor, J. (2010). *Plenitude: The new economics of true wealth*. New York, N.Y: Penguin Press. (ISBN: 9781594202544; Full e-book available through UW Library)

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 (Jan 21st)

- Course overview (No readings)

WEEK 2 (Jan 28th)

- Exploring classics & defining environmental sociology (Capek, 2009; Catton Jr and Dunlap, 1978)

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 (Feb 4th)

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

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

“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)”

First synthetic essay due on Friday, W3

WEEK 4 (Feb 11th)

- 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.

“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 (Feb 18th)

- Capitalism and Environment I (Keohane and Olmstead, 2007; Wright, 2008)

Keohane N and Olmstead O (2007) *Markets and the Environment, Foundations of Contemporary Environmental Studies Series*. Washington, DC: Island Press. (Selected pages)

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

“To an economist, the root cause of environmental problems concerns the incentives people face. The driving factor is not that individuals pursue their own interest but rather that in an unregulated market nothing align self-interest with the broader effects on society. (Keohane and Olmstead, 2007: 83)”

WEEK 6 (Feb 25th)

- Capitalism and Environment II (Schor and White, 2010)

Schor J and White KE (2010) *Plenitude: The new economics of true wealth*. Penguin Press New York. (Selected chapters)

“The logic driving plenitude is largely economic, focusing on efficiency and well-being. I’m betting that the intelligent way to act, for both individuals and society, is the one that will make humans, non-human species, and the planet better off. (Schor and White, 2010: 2)”

Second synthetic essay due on Friday, W6

IV. Feeling the Environment

WEEK 7 (March 4th)

- Social class and environmental consciousness (Kahan et al., 2007; McCright and Dunlap, 2011)

Kahan DM, Braman D, Gastil J, et al. (2007) Culture and identity-protective cognition: Explaining the white-male effect in risk perception. *Journal of Empirical Legal Studies* 4(3). Wiley Online Library: 465–505.

McCright AM and Dunlap RE (2011) The Politicization of Climate Change and Polarization in the American Public’s Views of Global Warming, 2001-2010. *Sociological Quarterly* 52(2). Wiley-Blackwell: 155–194. (SKIM)

“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)”

WEEK 8 (March 11th)

- Social construction of environment: How science matters? (Oreskes and Conway, 2010)

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.

Mid-term exam on March 13th, Wednesday, during the class meeting

SPRING BREAK!

WEEK 9 (March 25th)

- More on science and environment (Oreskes and Conway, 2013; Perrow, 1999)

Oreskes N and Conway EM (2013) *The Collapse of Western Civilization: A View from the Future*. *Daedalus* 142(1): 40–58.

Perrow C (1999) *Normal accidents*, updated edition. Princeton University Press. (Selected pages)

“Here we have the essence of the normal accident: the interaction of multiple failures that are not in a direct operational sequence. (Perrow, 1999: 23)”

Third synthetic essay due on Friday, W9

WEEK 10 (April 1st)

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

Beck U (1992) *Risk society : towards a new modernity*. Sage Publications. (Selected chapters)

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 (April 8th)

- Technological solutions of environmental crisis (Kleinman and Suryanarayanan, 2013; Winner, 1980)

Kleinman DL and Suryanarayanan S (2013) Dying bees and the social production of ignorance. *Science, Technology, & Human Values* 38(4). Sage Publications Sage CA: Los Angeles, CA: 492–517.

Winner L (1980) Do artifacts have politics? *Daedalus*. JSTOR: 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 (April 15th)

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

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

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.

“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)”

Fourth synthetic essay due on Friday, W12

WEEK 13 (April 22nd)

- Toward a food justice (MacKendrick, 2018; White, 2011)

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 (April 29th)

- Nature-me and Societal-me: Morality, Identity, and our Social life—Concluding Remarks (Bell, 1994)

Bell M (1994) *Childerley : nature and morality in a country village*. University of Chicago Press. (Selected chapters)

“What I found is that nature is at the heart of Childerleyans’ conception of themselves. The main point of this book is to demonstrate the importance in the lives of villagers of two kinds of moral thinking. One is moral thinking based on ideas the villagers consider to be socially derived. The other is moral thinking based on truths they consider to be above and free from the polluting interests of social life. In a world in which so many traditionally accepted sources of identity and motivation have come to be sharply questioned, in a sea of doubt, this alternative form of thinking gives villagers a *moral rock* on which to stand, a rock I will be calling the natural conscience. (Bell, 1994: 6-7)”

FINAL EXAM, MAY 10th, Location: TBD
FINAL PAPER DUE ON MAY 10TH

REFERENCES

- Beck U (1992) *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*. Ritter M (ed.) *Nation*. Theory, Culture & Society Series. Sage. DOI: 10.2307/2579937.
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- Keohane N and Olmstead O (2007) *Markets and the Environment, Foundations of Contemporary Environmental Studies Series*. Washington, DC: Island Press.
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- Oreskes N and Conway EM (2013) The Collapse of Western Civilization: A View from the Future. *Daedalus* 142(1): 40–58. DOI: 10.1162/DAED_a_00184.
- 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.
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And. DOI: 10.1098/rsta.2010.0327.
White MM (2011) Sisters of the soil: Urban gardening as resistance in Detroit. *Race/ethnicity: Multidisciplinary global contexts* 5(1). JSTOR: 13–28.
Winner L (1980) Do artifacts have politics? *Daedalus*. JSTOR: 121–136.
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