

# Sociology 359:

## Environmental Sociology

### Spring 2018

*Note: This syllabus is a living document; It will be updated as required; You will be notified when it is*

**Tuesdays and Fridays 12:35 to 1:55 p.m. Location: ARH 100 Douglass**

**Instructor:** Steven R. Brechin, Ph.D. Professor and Graduate Program Director, Sociology Rutgers University

**Office:** 101B Davison Hall Department of Sociology Douglass Campus  
26 Nichol Ave.

**Office Hours:** Tuesdays and Fridays after class; Wednesdays 1-3p.m. or by appointment

#### **Course Description:**

Environmental sociology is a subfield of sociology. It arose out of the turbulent 1960s and 1970s, forming particularly in direct response to the era's new environmental movement and the actual and perceived state of our natural environment. The modern environmental movement was built in part upon the earlier conservation and preservation movements headed by national elites in the late 1800s and early 1900s. These early elite movements sought to better manage and in some cases preserve our natural resources for future generations following decades of needless destruction and waste. The more modern movement was formed around a somewhat different set of concerns, more popular people concerns, particularly around air and water pollution, toxic exposures, and wilderness/species protection. The movement was punctuated by the first Earth Day in 1970 and a slew of national and international environmental laws/regulations and agencies followed. These included the Environmental Protection Agency, EPA, National Environmental Policy Act, NEPA, a framework for the government's role in protecting the environment. Related to NEPA came specific legislation such as the Clean Air and Clean Water Acts. In these early years concern for the environment was a bipartisan issue with near unanimous public support. Today, it has become much more ideologically and politically driven with Democrats/progressives largely in favor of environmental protections and Republicans/conservatives largely against.

Interestingly, in early years of the environmental movement, social scientists generally and sociologists specifically had no particular insights to offer in explanation for citizens mass awakening in many countries to expressed their new found concerns and values related to social change and environmental protection. Previously, social movements were thought to be based solely on economic interests and related economic inequalities [e.g. Marxian worker-capitalist conflicts]. This seemed to be a "different" kind of moment, a representative of a "New Social Movement" that focused on more social identity and other non-economic aspects or quality of life issues." Also, environmental sociology challenged the larger discipline of sociology to broaden its "sociological imagination" to encompass the environmental/physical basis of our social world; to focus attention on the fact that society is embedded within and dependent upon the natural world. It reasoned that society's impacts on the environment and those subsequent changes to the environment inevitably return to affect society and people's wellbeing. Hence if sociology as a discipline was to study society in full light, it had to embrace its environmental interrelationships and dependencies. In fact several early environmental sociologists predicted the up-start would revolutionize the main discipline. This epistemological revolution, however, is still waiting to happen although the specter of global climate change is starting to grab the attention of the mainstream discipline. The American Sociological Association established its Environment, Technology Section, ETS, in 1975: <http://www.envirosoc.org/> The International Sociological Association established its research committee on the environment known as RC 24 in 1971. <http://www.isa-sociology.org/rc24.htm>

This is an upper-level survey course designed for juniors and seniors, but students at any level are welcome. Although a background in sociology and ecology/ environment will most likely be helpful, it will not be essential for

doing well in the course, especially if you are motivated and have affinity to social science-based perspectives. We will explore public attitudes and values about nature and the environment here in the US as well as across the globe. We will examine classical and contemporary social theories that exist or have emerged in an attempt to explain societal-environment relationships. We will confront the nexus of the struggle – our economy vs. our environment. We also explore the sociology of global climate and the construction of social/scientific knowledge. We will also familiarize ourselves to issues of human population growth, energy needs and so on. We will end the course by considering possible alternative futures/choices that we will likely face. My teaching style is a combination presentation-discussion, i.e. where I combined both into one. [Note: At times, however, the class may be mostly presentation while another mostly discussion]. To engage you I will typically ask probing questions. I will frequently pose questions that you will be engaged to consider. I will sometimes answer your questions with another question in return. I do this in part to make you think even harder about these important issues that we face, but more importantly the answers to our environmental future will have to come mostly from you and your classmates, as well as from future generations. I enjoy discussing current events. They help to make what we read and discuss more real. Given we face the greatest environment-society challenge in the history of humankind, global climate change; we will be spending considerable time discussing this critical issue.

**Critical:** *For this class to work as well as gaining the most from it, it is essential that everyone stays current in the readings. This means having completed the assigned readings BEFORE coming to class. And you cannot engage the material and the class if you are not here. Hence my focus on attendance.*

**Resources:** We will use Sakai for classroom business. You will place your 2 reaction papers on Sakai. You will find as well all additional required readings on Sakai. Your main text is *An Invitation to Environmental Sociology* 5<sup>th</sup> Edition written by Michael Bell with this edition adding one of his former graduate students, Loka Ashwood. Note... I know it is a pain but 5<sup>th</sup> Edition is different from the 4<sup>th</sup> and earlier additions. Copies of the text are available in campus bookstores, but can be purchased or rented online. I will also place 2 copies on reserve at the Douglass Library.

**Learning Goals:** This course is designed to help you investigate our natural environment through a sociological lens. You will learn what environmental sociology is about and why it is an innovative subdiscipline – combining both social and ecological processes and understanding. You will learn how the environment touches all aspect of social life through the material, ideal, and the practical. You will also learn how to write critical commentary in written assignments.

**Etiquette and Expectations:** Within the context of this course, I expect each of you to raise questions and challenge statements made by me and your classmates. *However, this will be done always with respect.* I am convinced that engaged and vigorous debate of ideas and perspectives, combined with directed experiences are the key building blocks of knowledge production. [Discussion without acrimony and truly listening to the other's perspective is rapidly becoming a loss art within US political and media institutions today.] However to participate in spirited discussions one must be present physically and mentally/ academically, i.e. by having completed on time the readings and related assignments. Use of *cell phones and text messaging as well as laptops* for personal reasons during class time will be considered disrespectful to the group and will be penalized. I will occasionally ask you to use your devices to follow-up on pertinent issues.

### **Evaluations and Grading:**

You will be evaluated by three means – *attendance and participation; three in-class tests; and two relatively short reaction papers* on specific topics. Participation includes being present in class and participating in group discussion activities. Engaging the course and providing energy to the group are central to your participation evaluation. **Class discussion** is highly valued and rewarded in this course. However, this does NOT mean necessarily that those who speak-up / participate the most will receive the highest score. I will be looking for quality rather than quantity; energy creation vs. entropy. There will be three relatively short in class (blue book) essay tests. I will provide you with a study guide before each exam that will help organize your preparation. The exams will cover the assigned readings; presentations, films and discussions. The exams will each cover the full set of chapters of our text, *An Invitation to Environmental Sociology* (5<sup>th</sup> Edition) by Michael M. Bell and Loka Ashwood (Sage). READINGS ARE TO BE READ BY THE DAY ASSIGNED.

**Short Reaction Papers:** Critical thinking and writing skills are among the top to skill sets one needs to develop to be a successful citizen. On two occasions you will be asked to write a short 4 page paper (or so). Each paper will be in reaction to a specific video along with supportive materials. In reaction paper I am not looking for only a summary of the video/readings, but rather your engagement with the subject matter presented. I want your insights, views, and perspectives. Are you encouraged or angered by these subjects and perspectives presented and why, and so on? What do you think sound be done or not? Think of the project as writing an op-ed style (but with supportive references) for an online/print publication. This is meant to engage and sharpen your thinking about a particular topic. Please use APA or ASA style.

**Three Tests:** You will write there essay (blue book) exams. I do not believe in bubble exams. These exams will be given on Fridays around weeks 5, 10 and 15. See below for the exact dates. They will cover the readings and presentation from those weeks. While the tests are not designed to be accumulative, it is likely the perspectives you gain week by week will be. Hopefully, you will become a much more complex and integrative thinker. I will provide study guides a week or so prior each actual test.

**Grading:**

Attendance and Participation: 25% (each unexcused absence is -3 points)  
This will include regular in-class activities

**In-Class Short Essay Exams**

Test 1:	15%
Test 2:	15%
Test 3:	15%
Short Reaction Papers (2):	30% (15% each)

**Final Grades:** Every evaluation is worth 100 points. Each evaluation is then converted proportionally to its weight [see directly above] into a 100 point scale. You will receive a numerical score for every assignment. Grades are not curved so it is technically possible, although very unlikely, that everyone could receive an “A”. The numerical grade cut offs are as follows:

A	90.00+	C	70.00-77.99
B+	88.00-89.99	D+	68.00-69.99
B	80.00-87.99	D	60.00-67.99
C+	78.00-79.99	F	<60.00

**Key Dates – Tests and Papers**

<b>Reaction Paper 1:</b>	<b>T 2-6 12 noon (Sakai)</b>
<b>In class Test 1:</b>	<b>F 2-16</b>
<b>In class Test 2:</b>	<b>F 3-30</b>
<b>Reaction Paper 2:</b>	<b>T 4-10 12 noon (Sakai)</b>
<b>In class Test 3:</b>	<b>F 4-27</b>

<p><b>Current Academic Integrity Policy:</b>  <a href="http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/files/documents/AI_Policy_9_01_2011.pdf">http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/files/documents/AI_Policy_9_01_2011.pdf</a>  <i>Violations include: cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, denying others access to information or material, and facilitating violations of academic integrity.</i></p> <p><i>Optional: Instructors may include a Honor Pledge:</i></p> <p><i>"On my honor, I pledge that I have neither given nor received any unauthorized aid on this (exam, test, paper)."</i></p> <p><i>Or use the sakai honor pledge check box:</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><i>Honor Pledge: I have neither given nor received aid on this assignment.          (You must respond to submit your assignment.)</i></p>	<p><i>General Academic Integrity Link:</i>  <a href="http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/">http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/</a></p> <p><i>Resources for instructors (and students) can be found at:</i>  <a href="http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/resources">http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/resources</a></p> <p><i>WE ALSO RECOMMEND THAT INSTRUCTORS INCLUDE AT LEAST ONE OF THE FOLLOWING PLAGIARISM TUTORIALS IN THEIR COURSE DESIGN:</i></p> <p><i>Take a 20 minute interactive-tutorial on Plagiarism and Academic Integrity,</i>  <a href="http://www.scc.rutgers.edu/douglass/sal/plagiarism/intro.html">http://www.scc.rutgers.edu/douglass/sal/plagiarism/intro.html</a></p> <p><i>Consult Don't Plagiarize: Document Your Research! For tips about how to take notes so that you don't plagiarize by accident.</i>  <a href="http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/avoid_plagiarism">http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/avoid_plagiarism</a></p>
<p><b>Course Structure and Requirements</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>See Above</b></li> <li>• There will be times available for make-up exams if they are missed for acceptable reasons</li> <li>• Full disability policies and procedures are at <a href="http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/">http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/</a></li> <li>• Students with disabilities requesting accommodations must follow the procedures outlined at <a href="http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/request.html">http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/request.html</a></li> </ul> <p><b>Self-Reporting Absence Application:</b>  <b>Suggested language for syllabus</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Students are expected to attend all classes; if you expect to miss one or two classes, please use the University absence reporting website <a href="https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/">https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/</a> to indicate the date and reason for your absence. An email is automatically sent to me</i></li> </ul>	<p><i>University religious holiday policy is at</i>  <a href="http://scheduling.rutgers.edu/religious.shtml">http://scheduling.rutgers.edu/religious.shtml</a></p> <p><i>An interfaith calendar can be found at</i>  <a href="http://www.interfaithcalendar.org/index.htm">http://www.interfaithcalendar.org/index.htm</a></p> <p><i>University attendance policy is at</i>  <a href="http://sasundergrad.rutgers.edu/academics/course_s_registration-and-course-policies/attendance-and-cancellation-of-class">http://sasundergrad.rutgers.edu/academics/course_s_registration-and-course-policies/attendance-and-cancellation-of-class</a></p> <p><i>Generally, grading on attendance is not advised.</i></p>

**Week 1: INTRODUCTION**

- T 1-16 Introduction to the Course/ Environmental Sociology
- Overview of the course!
  - A Brief Introduction to Sociology
  - What is Environmental Sociology?
  - Learning More about YOU
  - What are your interests and concerns?
  - Presentation & Discussion

**Introduction to Classical Sociological Theory & Environment**

- F 1-19 The Environmental Sociology of:
- Robert Malthus
  - Charles Darwin
  - Herbert Spencer
  - Emile Durkheim
  - Classical Economy Theory – From Adam Smith to Friedrich Hayek

**Week 2: Introduction to Classical Sociological Theory & Environment Cont.**

- T 1-23 The Environmental Sociology of:
- Karl Marx
  - Max Weber
  - Karl Polanyi
  - Modern Environmental Politics: Ideological Wars

**Overview of Environmental Problems & Society**

- F 1-26 Presentation & Discussion
- Readings 1: Chapter 1 of Text, p.1-46
- Presentation & Group Discussion
- Readings 2: Brechin 2016: *Collective Action Problem of Climate Change* (Sakai)

**PART I: THE MATERIAL**

**Week 3 Consumption and Materialism**

- T 1-30 Presentation & Discussion
- Reading: Text Chapter 2 of Text, p. 49-77
- F 2-2 Film: *A Fierce Green Fire* [An Overview of the American Environmental Movement]
- Readings: Easton et al. *Are Their Limits to Growth?* (Sakai)
- Write Brief Reaction Paper 1; 4 pages double spaced **Due** Tuesday 2-7

#### **Week 4            Money and Markets**

- T 2-6            Presentation & Discussion  
Reading: Text Chapter 3, p. 78-106  
Reaction Paper 1: **Due Today** 12 noon (submit to course Sakai site)  
Group discussions about your papers
- F 2-9            Presentation & Discussions  
Group Discussions  
Readings: Weston and Brechin, *Karl Polanyi's Environmental Sociology* (Sakai)
- Distribution of Test Review Sheet

#### **Week 5:           Technology and Science**

- T 2-13           Presentation & Discussion  
Reading: Text Chapter 4: p. 107-130  
Reading: Easton et al. *Is Anthropogenic Global Warming Real and Dangerous?* (Sakai)  
Preparation/Review for Test 1
- F 2-16           **Essay Test 1 Blue Book on presentations & readings weeks 1-4**

#### **Week 6            Population & Development**

- T 2-20           Presentation and Discussion  
Reading: Text Chapter 5, p. 131-162
- F 2-23           Presentation & Group Discussion  
Reading: Easton et al. *Do We Have A Population Problem?* (Sakai)  
Worstell *Forbes* Ehrlich and Simon Population Bet and Debate Continued  
<http://www.forbes.com/sites/timworstell/2013/01/13/but-why-did-julian-simon-win-the-paul-ehrlich-bet/#405d450b368b>

#### **Week 7            Body and Justice**

- T 2-27           Presentation & Discussion  
Reading: Text Chapter 6, p. 163-192
- F 3-2            Presentation & Groups Discussion  
Readings: Easton et al. *Do we Need a Precautionary Principle?* (Sakai)  
MacKendrick “*Media Frames of Body Burdens*” (Sakai)

### **PART II: THE IDEAL**

#### **Week 8            The Ideology of Environmental Domination**

- T 3-6            Presentation & Discussion  
Reading: Text Chapter 7, p. 193-219

F 3-9                      Make-Up Day

**Spring Break March 13<sup>th</sup> and March 16<sup>th</sup>**

**Week 9                      The Ideology of Environmental Concern**

T 3-20                      Presentation & Discussion  
Readings, Text Chapter 8, p. 220-251  
Distribution of Test 2 Study Guide

F 3-23                      Presentation & Groups Discussion of Readings:  
US Environmental concern and partisan divide  
Global concern for the environment  
Readings: Dunlap et al. 2016 *Political Divide Widens* (Sakai)  
                 Brechin and Bhandari 2011 *Perceptions of Climate Change Worldwide* (Sakai)

**Week 10                    The Human Nature of Nature**

T 3-27                      Presentation & Discussion  
Readings: Text Chapter 9, p. 2  
Review for Test 2

F 3-30                      **Essay Test 2: Presentations and Readings from Weeks 5-9**

**Week 11                    The Rationality of Risk**

T 4-3                        Presentation & Discussion  
Readings: Text Chapter 10, p. 282-312

F 4-6                        Film 2: Merchants of Doubt  
Reaction Paper 2: **Due** Tuesday 4-11  
Readings: Brulle: <http://drexel.edu/now/archive/2013/December/Climate-Change/>  
Dunlap and McCright: *Organized Climate Change Denial* (Sakai)  
Optional/Additional Reading: Brulle “*Institutionalizing delay: foundation funding and the creation of U.S. climate change counter-movement organizations*” (*Climatic Change*) (Sakai)

**PART III: THE PRACTICAL**

**Week 12                    Mobilizing the Ecological Society**

T 4-10                      Presentation & Discussion  
Readings: Text Chapter 11, p. 313-344  
**Due: Reaction Paper 2 12 noon**  
Group Discussions of your Papers

F 4-13                      Presentation & Discussion  
Group Readings and Discussion  
Visions of Sustainability - Renewable Energy

Readings: Easton et al. *Is Shale Gas The Solution to Our Energy Woes?* (Sakai)

**Week 13      Governing the Ecological Society**

T 4-17      Presentation & Discussion  
Readings: Text Chapter 12, p. 345-364

F 4-20      Presentation & Discussion  
Readings of Text Chapter 13, p. 365-389

Distribution of Test 3 Study Guide

**Week 14:      Living in the Ecological Society**

T 4-24      Presentation & Group Discussions  
**Reading:** from Juliet Schor on Plenitude/ True Wealth (to be assigned)  
Reading: Easton et al – High Tech vs. Organic Agriculture (Sakai)  
Designing a Sustainable Society – What would it look like?  
How Might Permaculture/Search for Plenitude Be Expressed in the Farm to Table Movement?

Preparation for Test 3

F 4-27      **Essay Test 3: All material from week 10-14**

**THANK YOU! HAVE A GREAT SUMMER AND BEYOND**