

Environmental Sociology

16:920:577 (16:378:502:01 ; 01:920:492:04)

Thursdays, 1:00pm-3:40pm

Seminar Room, Davison Hall, 26 Nichol Ave (Douglass)

Professor Norah MacKendrick
Davison Hall, Room 107
26 Nichol Avenue
Email: norah.mackendrick@rutgers.edu

Office Hours: Mondays, 1-2pm

Environmental sociology examines the changing relationship between social systems and the environment, and explores how environmental issues come to be defined as social problems. This course examines multiple perspectives within the field--including risk, political economy, consumer studies and social movements-- to understand the range of explanations for environmental degradation and improvement.

The first part of the course is dedicated to introducing students to key theoretical perspectives in environmental sociology. In the second part, we look at competing explanations for why a meaningful response to environmental problems, such as climate change, has failed to materialize and what transformative change might look like.

Learning Objectives

1. Identify main theoretical perspectives and research problems that are considered part of the 'core' or 'classic' environmental sociology.
2. Examine emerging approaches and questions that characterize contemporary environmental sociology.
3. Generate new theoretical and analytical questions related to the causal mechanisms underlying environmental degradation and improvement
4. Identify theoretical and methodological overlaps, contradictions and gaps in knowledge in the environmental sociology literature
5. Synthesize multiple academic readings and promote the exchange of ideas
6. Identify new research questions related to the study of the environment and propose ways to study those questions

To measure students' achievement of these objectives, students will be evaluated through the following requirements:

- Moderation of a weekly seminar
- Weekly reading reports
- Final research paper or proposal

In class, I'll draw on students' interests and theoretical expertise to help move discussions forward and generate new questions and debates. Students should feel free bring other materials—both popular and academic—that can add to our discussions.

Diversity Statement

The Rutgers Sociology Department strives to create an environment that supports and affirms diversity in all manifestations, including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, social class, disability status, region/country of origin, and political orientation. We also celebrate diversity of theoretical and methodological perspectives among our faculty and students and seek to create an atmosphere of respect and mutual dialogue. We have zero tolerance for violations of these principles and have instituted clear and respectful procedures for responding to such grievances.

Course Policies

Contacting me

My office hours are listed above. If you are not able to make these hours, please contact me and we can arrange to meet at another time. The best way to reach me is by email. I check email throughout the week (not on weekends), and I will do my best to respond within 48 hours.

Student conduct and plagiarism

I expect students to be on time for class and to stay for the duration of the lecture. The classroom should be a place for the free exchange of ideas, and students should act with mutual respect and use common courtesy. I hope for, and indeed encourage, debate among students. I welcome thoughtful discussion and critical thinking; but discourteous remarks will not be tolerated.

Students are expected to follow the Code of Student Conduct, which can be found here:

<http://policies.rutgers.edu/PDF/Section10/10.2.11-current.pdf>.

Academic integrity and Plagiarism

All students must review Rutgers' policy on plagiarism. I take plagiarism very seriously and will follow University policy if I suspect plagiarism. Please refer to:

http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/files/documents/AI_Policy_9_01_2011.pdf

Disabilities

To discuss academic accommodations for a documented disability, please contact me during the first week of class. Note that you must also contact the Office of Disability Services:

Kreeger Learning Center

151 College Avenue, Suite 123

E-mail Address: dsoffice@rci.rutgers.edu

Phone: (732) 932-2848

Grades

The final grade is based on your total score (out of 100) calculated from all assignments.

A	90-100
B+	85-89
B	80-84
C+	75-79
C	70-74
D	60-69
F	59 or less

Assignments

Reading Responses (30%)

Starting the week of January 27th you will be responsible for submitting a reading response (RR) for every class. *RRs are due by **noon** every Wednesday via Sakai.* Reading responses should be submitted as **blog entries** on the Sakai site so all members of the class can read each other's responses.

RRs should be about one-page (400-500 words or so) that address the assigned readings for the upcoming class. These should be *analytic* responses to the readings rather than summaries. You have a lot of freedom here: you can construct an argument, ask and answer a question, observe strengths and weaknesses in the authors' argument(s), and relate concepts across multiple readings to each other.

(1) Leading a seminar (30%)

You will have an opportunity to lead one, perhaps two, weekly seminars. You can present your reading response for that week and provide a brief summary of the readings that identifies some of the key concepts and significance of the material. You can provide the class with a handout of discussion points and questions and use these points to guide class discussion and debate.

(2) Final Paper (40%)

Due: May 9th (Outline due March 27th)

This is a 5,000 to 7,000 word paper. I will provide more detail in class. You have two choices for this assignment:

- A. Write an in-depth analysis of a topic related to course material. This involves reviewing, synthesizing and analyzing one or more bodies of literature. You can develop new research questions, identify overlaps and inconsistencies among several bodies of theory, etc.
- B. Write a research proposal on a topic related to environmental sociology.

Assigned Readings

You must attend all classes and come prepared to discuss the assigned readings. I expect that you will complete the reading *before* class so that you can participate in discussions. All assigned journal articles are available on Sakai and books are available on reserve at Douglass Library.

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS

PART A: CONCEPTS IN ENVIRONMENTAL SOCIOLOGY

Introductory class—Jan 23

Pellow, David N., and Hollie Nyseth. (2013). "An Environmental Sociology for the Twenty-First Century." *Annual Review of Sociology* 39.1

Environmental Sociology: A brief history and overview—Jan 30

Hannigan, John. (2006). *Environmental Sociology* (2nd edn.). London & New York: Routledge. [Pp 1-35]

Buttel, F. H. (1987). New directions in environmental sociology. *Annual review of sociology*, 465-488.

Competing explanations for environmental degradation—Feb 6

Fisher, Dana R. and William R. Freudenburg. (2001). "Ecological modernization and its critics: Assessing the past and looking toward the future." *Society & Natural Resources* 14(8): 701-709.

Gould, K. A., Pellow, D. N., & Schnaiberg, A. (2004). "Interrogating the treadmill of production: Everything you wanted to know about the treadmill but were afraid to ask." *Organization & Environment*, 17(3), 296-316.

Rudel, T.K., Roberts J. Timmons, Carmin, J. (2011). Political Economy of the Environment. *Annual Review of Sociology* 37:221–38.

The nature-society divide— Feb 13

Freudenburg, W. R., Frickel, S., & Gramling, R. (1995). Beyond the nature/society divide: Learning to think about a mountain. *Sociological Forum* Vol. 10, No. 3, pp. 361-392

Goldman, M., & Schurman, R. A. (2000). Closing the "great divide": New social theory on society and nature. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 563-584.

Murphy, R. (2004). Disaster or Sustainability: The Dance of Human Agents with Nature's Actants. *Canadian Review of Sociology/Revue canadienne de sociologie*, 41(3), 249-266.

Risk— Feb 20

Cable, Sherry, Thomas E. Shriver, and Tamara L. Mix. 2008. Risk society and contested illness: The case of nuclear weapons workers. *American Sociological Review* 73(3): 380-400.

Beamish, T. D. (2000). Accumulating trouble: Complex organization, a culture of silence, and a secret spill. *Social Problems*, 473-498.

Clarke, L. (1993). The disqualification heuristic: when do organizations misperceive risk? *Research in Social Problems and Public Policy*, 5(1), 289-312.

Freudenburg, William R. (1993) "Risk and recreancy: Weber, the division of labor, and the rationality of risk perceptions." *Social Forces* 71.4 (1993): 909-932.

Regulatory science—Feb 27

Vogel, Sarah A. 2013. Is it safe? BPA and the struggle to define the safety of chemicals. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. [Chapters 1, 4, 5]

Scott Frickel and M. Bess Vincent. 2007. "Katrina, Contamination, and the Unintended Organization of Ignorance," *Technology in Society*, 29:181-188.

Environmental (in)justice—March 6

Mohai, P., Pellow, D. N., & Timmons, R. (2009). Environmental Justice. *Annual Review of Environment and Resources*, 34, 405-430.

Pellow, D. N. (2000). Environmental inequality formation - Toward a theory of environmental injustice. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 43(4), 581-601.

Environmental (in)justice: Case Studies— March 13

Sze, J. (2007). *Noxious New York: the racial politics of urban health and environmental justice*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press. [1-3, 6]

Szasz, A. (1994). *Ecopolitism: toxic waste and the movement for environmental justice*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. [Chapter 1 and all of Part I]

MARCH 20th (Reading Break)

Environmental Social Movements--March 27

Gottlieb, R. (2005). Forcing the spring: the transformation of the American environmental movement. Washington, DC: Island Press. [Part 1]

Taylor, D.E. 1997. American Environmentalism: The Role of Race, Class and Gender in Shaping Activism 1820-1995. *Race, Gender & Class* 5(1): 16-62.

Due: Final paper summary and outline

PART B: EXPLORING MECHANISMS FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

Postmaterialism and Global Environmentalism—April 3rd

Guest: Dr. Steven Brechin, Professor, Department of Sociology, Rutgers University

Brechin, S. R. (1999). "Objective Problems, Subjective Values, and Global Environmentalism: Evaluating the postmaterialist argument and challenging a new explanation" *Social Science Quarterly*, 80(4): 793-809.

Mohai, P., Simões, S., & Brechin, S. R. (2010). Environmental concerns, values and meanings in the Beijing and Detroit metropolitan areas. *International Sociology*, 25(6), 778-817.

Nawrotzki, Raphael J., and Fred C. Pampel. "Cohort change and the diffusion of environmental concern: a cross-national analysis." *Population and Environment* (2012): 1-25.

(Topic TBA)—April 10th

Political Polarization and Anti-reflexivity—April 17th

Fisher, D. R., Waggle, J., & Leifeld, P. (2013). Where Does Political Polarization Come From? Locating Polarization Within the US Climate Change Debate. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 57(1), 70-92.

McCright, A., & Dunlap, R. (2010). Anti-reflexivity: The American conservation movement's success in undermining climate science and policy. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 27(2-3), 100-133.

McCright, A. M., & Dunlap, R. E. (2003). Defeating Kyoto: The conservative movement's impact on US climate change policy. *Social Problems*, 50(3), 348-373.

Denial—April 24

Norgaard, K. M. 2011. Living in denial: Climate change, emotions and everyday life. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.

Lifestyle change and consumer citizenship—May 1st

Lorenzen, J. A. (2012). Going Green: The Process of Lifestyle Change. *Sociological Forum*, 27(1), 94-116.

Rudel, Thomas K. 2013. *Defensive environmentalists and the dynamics of global reform*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. [Chapter 1 -3; 7 - 8]

Szasz, Andrew. 2007. Shopping our way to safety: How we changed from protecting the environment to protecting ourselves. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. [Introduction, Part II, Chapter 7]

Final Paper Due May 9th, 2014