

Environmental Sociology 01:920:359
Spring 2022
MW 5:40pm-7:00pm
College Avenue Campus/Hardenbergh B2

Lecturer: John Gulick
E-mail: jlg392@scarletmail.rutgers.edu

Office: To be announced
Office hours: M4:15-5:15pm and by Zoom appt.

Course description and goals

This course develops an understanding of the dynamic interactions between people and their biogeophysical environments — as mediated through the capitalist political economy and cultural norms, values, and ideologies — with emphases on theorizing, describing, and interpreting the socioecological transformations that made our world of imperial modernity, and assessing present-day issues such as the Green New Deal, agroecology, and regenerative land management practices. By the conclusion of the term, students should be able to analyze anthropogenic global heating, post-carbon energy transition, community resilience, and climate justice through the conceptual frameworks (among others) of Merchant’s autonomous nature, Altvater’s fossil capital, and O’Connor’s second contradiction.

Course Materials

You do not need to buy any books, or even a reader, for this course. All required readings — and some auxiliary materials as well — will be made available in downloadable pdf format at the course Canvas site.

Class Format

Class will meet twice a week for an hour and twenty minutes. Monday classes will consist primarily of lectures and in-person discussion. Wednesday classes will often consist of documentary screenings, followed by participation in online discussion groups at the course Canvas site. During lecture you are free to ask questions, contribute comments, and the like. The lecturer will upload Powerpoint slides of lecture notes to the course Canvas site.

If you need to contact the lecturer outside of class about any relevant matter, please send him an electronic mail message via the course Canvas system and he will reply to you as promptly as he can.

Assignments and evaluation

On nine occasions during the semester, typically after the showing of a documentary, you will be required to contribute to an online discussion group. The lecturer will open the discussion group with prompts pertaining to the documentary and how it relates to themes, concepts, analyses, and arguments featured in associated lecture and reading materials. To earn a full five points of credit for participation, you will be asked to submit roughly 250 written words to each discussion group. From the moment a discussion group is opened, you will be given nearly five days to make your contribution (or contributions) before the deadline. Late contributions will be

accepted, but subject to modest penalties. In sum, your contributions to online discussion groups will be worth 45% of your overall grade.

There will be a mid-term exam on March 9. The exam will cover all material featured in the course up to that point and will consist of fill-in-the-blank, matching, multiple choice, and true/false questions, as well as several written answer questions. The mid-term exam will be worth 25% of your overall grade. The lecturer will stage an in-class review of mid-term exam material on March 7.

A take-home exam made up of a series of essay questions will comprise your final. The assignment will be distributed after the last class meeting on May 2 and you will have until May 11, 5:00pm to turn it in. The final exam will be worth 25% of your overall grade.

Participation in in-class discussion will be worth 5% of your overall grade.

A student's lecture attendance record will be used to adjudicate cases in which his or her final grade rests on the boundary between a higher and a lower grade; in this type of situation, students with three or less unexcused absences will be given the benefit of the doubt.

University attendance and religious holiday policies are at http://catalogs.rutgers.edu/generated/nb-ug_current/pg1433.html.

Assignment and grading summary

Nine (online) discussion groups (9 x 5 pts)	45%
Midterm exam (25 pts)	25%
Final exam (25 pts)	25%
In-class participation	5%
<i>Total</i>	<i>100%</i>

Grading scale

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

Class-by-class Lesson Plans

January 19. Course introduction.

January 24-26. What is environmental sociology? Autonomous nature. The four laws of ecology.

Reading: White, "Sociology, society, and the environment"; Merchant, "Can Nature Be Controlled?"; Foster, "The four laws of ecology and economic production"; *New York Times*, "Wet wipes box says flush..."

Videos: *Toast*; *Environmentalism: From the Control of Nature to Partnership with Carolyn Merchant*.

contribution to Online Group Discussion #1 due 5:00pm January 31

January 31; February 2. Nature-labor-culture.

Reading: Merchant, "Ecology and History"; E&S Encyclopedia, "Modes of Production" (skim); Worster, "Doing Environmental History" (skim).

Video: *1491 Part 2: Environment*.

contribution to Online Group Discussion #2 due 5:00pm February 7

February 7-9. Classical sociology and the environment: sins of omission.

Marx's corrective. The second contradiction of capital.

Reading: Murphy, "Sociology as If Nature Did Not Matter: An Ecological Critique" (skim); Foster, "Marx's Theory of Metabolic Rift: Classical Foundations for Environmental Sociology" (skim); O'Connor, "Capitalism, Nature, Socialism: A Theoretical Introduction" (skim).

February 14-16. Proximate causes of and misleading explanations for biospheric crisis: overpopulation and bad technology.

Reading: Kallis, "Why Malthus Was Wrong"; Moore Lappé and Schurman, *The Missing Piece in the Population Puzzle* (skim); "Technology," (E&S Encyclopedia entry); O'Connor, "Technology and ecology" (optional); Wallis, "Technology and ecosocialism" (optional).

Videos: *The Legacy of Malthus*; *David Noble: A Wrench in the Gears*.

contribution to Online Group Discussion #3 due 5:00pm February 21

February 21-23. The socioecological crisis of medieval European agriculture.

Reading: Moore, "Nature and the Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism"; McCoy, *To Govern The Globe* (Ebook edition) pp. 86-92.

Video: *The Black Death: The World's Most Devastating Plague*.

contribution to Online Group Discussion #4 due 5:00pm February 28

February 28-March 2. Environmental inequality, internal colonialism, and neocolonialism.

Reading: O'Connor, "Uneven and combined development and ecological crisis"; "Colonialism" (E&S Encyclopedia entry); "Underdeveloped (Third) World" (E&S Encyclopedia entry); "Dependency" (E&S Encyclopedia entry); "Bhopal Gas Tragedy" (E&S Encyclopedia entry).

Videos: *Seconds from Disaster: Bhopal*.

contribution to Online Group Discussion #5 due 5:00pm March 7

March 7. Mid-term exam review.

March 9. Mid-term exam.

March 21-23-28-30. Fossil capitalism, anthropogenic global heating, and the threat of biospheric and civilizational unraveling.

Reading: Li, "Climate Change, Peak Oil, and the Global Crisis" (skim); Altvater, "The Social and Natural Environment of Fossil Capitalism" (skim); Steffen et al, "Trajectories of the Earth System in the Anthropocene" (optional); Beuret, "Will Climate Change Itself Derail Plans to Reduce Emissions"; McCoy, *To Govern The Globe* (Ebook edition) pp. 565-595.

Videos: *What is a planetary boundary? Mongabay explains* (required); *Anthropocene* (optional).

contribution to Online Group Discussion #6 due 5:00pm April 4

April 4-6-11. GHG emissions reduction/carbon sink restoration ("mitigation") versus socioecological resilience ("adaptation"). Climate justice.

Reading: Cox, "An Engineer, An Economist, and an Ecomodernist Walk into a Bar and Order a Free Lunch"; Ribeiro, "People's resistance against engineering"; Bendell, "Deep Adaptation: A Map for Navigating Climate Tragedy" (skim); Ajl, "As Chavez said 'Let's not change the climate, let's change the system'"; Edwards, "Climate justice" (skim).

Video: *How We End Climate Imperialism*.

contribution to Online Group Discussion #7 due 5:00pm April 13

April 13-18-20. Post-hydrocarbon fuel transition: renewable energy, energy use, and degrowth. The political sociology of the Green New Deal.

Reading: Fitz, "What Is Energy Denial"?; Gerber et al, "Degrowth and environmental justice: an alliance between two movements?" (skim); Singh, "Green reforms and individual interventions in the Green New Deal transition to ecosocialism" (skim); Guy and Zacher, "What the Sunrise Movement Can Do Better."

Video: *Planet of the Humans*.

contribution to Online Group Discussion #8 due 5:00pm April 25

April 25-27; May 2. The critique of industrial agriculture. Regenerative agriculture: finance capital and corporate agribusiness versus smallholder populism and indigenous agroecology. Bioregional planning, landscape restoration, and flood and wildfire risk reduction.

Reading: Ajl, *A People's Green New Deal*, Chapter Six; Tumber, "Land Without Bread"; Aliento, "Why farming needs a regional planning approach"; Gulick, "Climate risk, land regeneration, hazard mitigation, and bioregional planning."

Videos: *We Feed the World*; *Kiss the Ground*.

contribution to Online Group Discussion #9 due 5:00pm May 2

Take-home final exam due May 11 5:00pm

Other department/university policies and resources

Learning resources:

Learning Centers: <https://rlc.rutgers.edu/>

Academic Advising for SAS students: <https://sasundergrad.rutgers.edu/advising/advising>

Online Learning Tools from Rutgers University Libraries including Rutgers RIOT, Searchpath and RefWorks <http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/tutorials>

Current Academic Integrity Policy:

Summary: <http://nbacademicintegrity.rutgers.edu/home-2/academic-integrity-policy/>

Resources for Students: <https://nbprovost.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-students>

Technology: Please visit the Rutgers Student Tech Guide page for resources available to all students. If you do not have the appropriate technology for financial reasons, please email Dean of Students deanofstudents@echo.rutgers.edu for assistance. If you are facing other financial hardships, please visit the Office of Financial Aid at <https://financialaid.rutgers.edu/>.

Learning remotely presents new challenges. For assistance with learning how to address these challenges, please consult the resources available here: https://rlc.rutgers.edu/remote_instruction

Disability Services: (848) 445-6800 / Lucy Stone Hall, Suite A145, Livingston Campus, 54 Joyce Kilmer Avenue, Piscataway, NJ 08854 / <https://ods.rutgers.edu/>

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation:

<https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at:

<https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form>.

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations must follow the procedures outlined at <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/getting-registered>.

Counseling, ADAP & Psychiatric Services (CAPS): (848) 932-7884 / 17 Senior Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901 <http://health.rutgers.edu/medical-counseling-services/counseling/>
CAPS is a University mental health support service that includes counseling, alcohol and other drug assistance, and psychiatric services staffed by a team of professionals within Rutgers Health services to support students' efforts to succeed at Rutgers University. CAPS offers a variety of services that include: individual therapy, group therapy and workshops, crisis intervention, referral to specialists in the community, and consultation and collaboration with campus partners.

Crisis Intervention: <http://health.rutgers.edu/medical-counseling-services/counseling/crisis-intervention/>

Report a Concern: <http://health.rutgers.edu/do-something-to-help/>

Violence Prevention & Victim Assistance (VPVA)
(848) 932-1181 / 3 Bartlett Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901 www.vpva.rutgers.edu/
The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance provides confidential crisis intervention, counseling and advocacy for victims of sexual and relationship violence and stalking to students, staff and faculty. To reach staff during office hours when the university is open or to reach an advocate after hours, call 848-932-1181.