

University of Manitoba
Department of Sociology
Sociology 3838 - A01
Ecology and Society

Winter, 2010
3 Credit Hours



MWF: 12:30-1:20
318 St. Paul's College

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Office Hours: T: 1-2; W: 1:30-
2:30



Sociology 3838 examines changing patterns of social organizations of civilizations, the resultant social constructions of the human/nature interface, the human social contribution to the global ecological crisis, and possible strategies to create sustainable societies. Consideration of topics such as population, consumption, capitalism, and agricultural practices. Prerequisite: [a grade of "C" or better in SOC 1200 (077.120) or SOC 1201 (077.120)] or [a grade of "C" or better in both SOC 1211 (077.121) and SOC 1221 (077.122)].

The Point of Taking This Course

This course will provide you with a thorough foundation to think and act on issues involving the interaction of human societies and nature. By the end, you will have gained two fundamental things. First, you'll have an improved understanding of the social drivers of environmental change, and the consequences of that change for human individuals and societies. That is, you'll tighten your grasp of how human patterns of behavior affect the ecological systems that support us, and how that in turn alters the possibilities for human survival and development. Hopefully, if you haven't already done so, you'll be able to critique the previous sentence from at least one environmental perspective. Second, you'll have a good overview of the emerging sub-discipline of environmental sociology. We'll get an introduction to the major areas of debate among scholars, policy-makers, and activists, and to the range of lenses that all of these actors variously apply to their observation and analyses of environmental degradation.

Class Format

You are not a vessel to be filled, but an active and necessary participant in your own education, as well as that of your colleagues. You'll be expected to fulfill that role. That means coming to class prepared by having completed and reflected upon the assigned readings, and by putting yourself in an active attitude of learning. Don't come to class expecting only to sit and listen.

There will be one or two articles and/or chapters to read for each meeting, which you **MUST** have read prior to class. Failure to do so means that you won't be able to contribute to the class discussion, and will thus be dead weight that your classmates have to carry through the seminar. Don't inflict this on your colleagues. There will normally be a short lecture by the course instructor to set some context, after which we will turn to a discussion of the readings, attempting to connect them to one another, to our own lives, and the lives of others. There will be occasional films or other multimedia presentations as warranted.

Required Texts

Princen, T., M. Maniates, and K. Conca (eds). 2002. *Confronting Consumption*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press

Clapp, J, and P. Dauvergne. 2005. *Paths to a Greener World*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Additional Readings to be distributed.

Assessment

Your grade in this course will be assessed through the following means:

Change Project: 125 points

Paper: 125 points

Mid-Term Test: 100 points

Final Exam: 100 points

In-class and Short Assignments (five): 50 points

Total: 500 Points.

Change Project: Mahatma Gandhi is famous for (among other things) instructing his followers to "be the change you want to see in the world." Here is your chance to follow the Mahatma's teaching (though the taint of coercion already infuses your efforts). Each student will be expected to change an aspect of their regular behavior that negatively impacts on the environment. Here's how you are going to proceed:

1. Pick an "environmental problem." There's no shortage to choose from.

2. Relate it to your life. If you can't find something in your regular or periodic behavior that's damaging to the environment, you aren't looking very hard.
3. Make a specific commitment to reducing or eliminating that behavior. Write it down in a proposal to me that includes a description of the environmental issue you aim to address, and the specific change in your behavior that you plan to undertake. Changes might include adopting a vegetarian or vegan diet for two weeks (vegetarians are barred from this, since it doesn't constitute a change), giving up automobile transportation for two weeks, aiming for zero landfill waste for two weeks, or minimizing your energy consumption over a month. Models even exist to test if you can adopt a "zero carbon" lifestyle for period of time. Use your imagination. You should be able to tell me how you plan on charting progress toward your committed goal. Proposals are due January 20th.

After the specified change period, you will write a 1500 word reflection on your experience. The reflection will include a brief introduction to the environmental problem at hand (deforestation, greenhouse gas production, water, air, or soil pollution, species extinction, etc...), a restatement of your attempt to address the problem individually, and a reflection of your experience. You should comment on how your life was affected, what your impact on the environmental problem was, how the experience changed you, problems you encountered in making the change, particularly those involving norms, social structures and institutions, observations on how your friends, colleagues, or family responded to your change, and whether you intend to continue with the shift. Reflections are due on March 22.

Research Paper: Each student is responsible for the completion of a research paper on a problem relevant to Environmental Sociology. A list of potential topics from which to develop your thesis will be provided, but you are in no way constrained by it. Any issue relevant to the course topic will be acceptable, but if you are in doubt, check with me early on in the semester. You will be asked to provide a working title, paragraph description of your paper topic, and a preliminary bibliography by February 10. Papers are to be 2500-3000 words, cleanly edited, and appropriately cited. Papers are due on March 31.

Grade Cutoffs:

A+	90-100%	450-500 points
A	80-89%	400-449 points
B+	76-79%	378-399 points
B	70-75%	350-377 points
C+	66-69%	328-349 points
C	60-65%	300-327 points
D	50-59%	250-299 points
F	49% or less	0-249 points

Course Policies and Practices

1. Classroom Comportment.

We want to maintain an environment of lively discussion that allows for disagreement and a diversity of views and perspectives. Basically, this means behaving respectfully toward the instructor and toward one another. It also means that you have a responsibility to yourself and to the rest of the class to speak your mind, and to do so in a way that furthers the conversation. We must all be willing and able to speak, to support our arguments with logic and empirical evidence, and to be willing to modify our pre-existing stances and beliefs.

Part of maintaining a respectful environment is being fully present. Turn off your cell phones, iPhones, iPods, and other gadgetry. If you must take notes on a laptop, please do so, but keep your computer use to those activities necessary for class participation.

2. Academic Integrity:

Students should acquaint themselves with the University's policy on plagiarism and cheating (section 7.1), exam personation and duplicate submission (see Section 4.2.8 in the University of Manitoba Undergraduate Calendar 2009-2010). The common penalty in Arts for plagiarism on a written assignment is F on the paper and F (CW) for the course. For the most serious acts of plagiarism, such as the purchase of an essay and repeat violations, this penalty can also include suspension for a period of up to five years from registration in courses taught in a particular department in Arts or from all courses taught in this Faculty. The Faculty also reserves the right to submit student work that is suspected of being plagiarized to Internet sites designed to detect plagiarism.

The common penalty in Arts for academic dishonesty on a test or examination is F for the paper, F (CW) for the course, and a one-year suspension from courses acceptable for credit in the Faculty. For more serious acts of academic dishonesty on a test or examination, such as repeat violations, this penalty can also include suspension for a period of up to five years from registration in courses taught in a particular department in Arts or from all courses taught in or accepted for credit by this Faculty. The Faculty is considering adopting a zero-tolerance approach for "cheating" on either a term test or a final examination. Under this approach, students for whom allegations of cheating have been upheld will receive a final course grade of F (CW) and a minimum two-year suspension. Multiple offences of cheating will result in an increased term of suspension.

If you engage in any of the above offenses, expect no mercy from me if you get caught. While most of these acts are pretty straightforward, some students are a bit uncertain about plagiarism.

PLAGIARISM: READ THIS. I WILL ACCEPT NO EXCUSES FOR PLAGIARISM.

While it sounds fancy, **plagiarism** is basically ripping off somebody else's writing and ideas and presenting them as your own. **It is serious, and it is easily avoided.** If you get an idea from somewhere else and present it in your work, whether you are quoting directly from it or not, provide a proper citation in an acceptable format. If it is a direct quote, place it in quotation marks. In the body of your text, you can provide a parenthetical citation like (Smith 2005: 267), where Smith is the author's last name, 2005 is the year of publication, and 267 is the page upon which you found the idea or quotation. Then give a full reference in a separate reference section at the end, like so:

Smith, Bob. 2005. *My Unbelievably Brilliant Book of Ideas*. New York: Conglomerate Publishing Co.

For citations of journal or newspaper articles, online sources, presentations, and other tricky stuff, consult a style guide like the one found at:

http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html

Cutting and pasting material from the Web is NOT research. It is plagiarism, and it will be detected. Do not cut and paste from the Web or any other source.

You should also be aware that it is a serious breach of academic integrity to manipulate, falsify, or falsely represent data used in a paper, presentation or thesis. The Faculty of Arts treats data manipulation as exceptional cases of academic fraud, with penalties of 'F' on the paper, 'F-CW' in the course, and suspension ranging from 2-5 years.

3. Late Work

In this class, it is extremely important that you stay on track to successfully complete your final paper. This is a multi-stage process, and if you fall behind early, it will be difficult to catch up. As such, I expect you to complete the course assignments by the due dates listed above. Failure to do so will result in a 10% reduction in your grade each day for the first five days, after which time you will receive a zero grade on the assignment.

In the event that you fall victim to a documentable catastrophe, or feel called to participate in a pivotal event designed to bring about revolutionary change in the world, either of which results in a late assignment, come and explain your situation to me, and we'll arrive at an accommodation that gets you on track to finish your paper on time.

Last day for voluntary withdrawal: **March 19, 2010**

Topics and Reading List
TBA