University of Manitoba
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
Community and Social Reconstruction
SOC 3840 A01
3 Credit Hours, Second Term 2008/09
244 University College

INSTRUCTOR:	Rod Kueneman
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TEXTS: Broswimmer, Franz. *Ecocide: A Short History of the Mass Extinction of Species*, Pluto Press, 2002, ISBN 0-7453-1934-3

Cavanagh, John and Jerry Mander (eds.). *Alternatives to Economic Globalization: Another World is Possible*, Second Edition, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 2004, ISBN 1-57675-303-4

Barnes, Peter. *Capitalism 3.0: A Guide to Reclaiming the Commons*, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 2006, ISBN 1576753611

Weisman, Alan. *Gaviotas: A Village to Reinvent the World*, Chelsea Green Publishing Co, 1998, ISBN 189013228-4

Register, Richard. *Ecocities: Rebuilding Cities in Balance with Nature*, Revised Edition, New Society Publishers, 2006, ISBN 0-86571-552-1

The books are listed in the order in which they will be discussed.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

We will begin by briefly reviewing the current global social landscape which is dominated by a few powerful nation states, a growing number of "failed" states, and is characterized by a general reduction of the welfare state programs provided by them. We will then expand this review to consider the impact of the concentrated power of transnational corporations, and the effects of the global market structure on communities, working people, and the ecosphere. We will consider alternatives to economic globalization.

There are limits to what can be achieved by revamping the structure, size and operating conditions of corporations by focussing on them alone. We will give serious consideration to Barnes' call for the minting of new institutions such as commons trusts and common property to constrain capitalism in the interests of human beings and the rest of the community of life. Our focus will not only be on his "two engine" economy, but also on how commons trusts create locations for citizen to enlighten themselves and to directly help shape economic and social policy and the use of technology. This will complete our overview of the macro structures that need to be reconfigured in order to achieve sustainability and justice.

We then move on to consider the effects of modernity on the local communities and the other intermediate-scale social formations which are, arguably, the proper study of sociology. We will consider the proposition that some of the local and personal problems created by powerful states and market economies can be solved by revitalizing "civil society" or the so-called "third sector." We will explore the notion that the significant problems thrown up by modern human institutions can be partly addressed by small, local, community groups. We will explore some actual efforts such as intentional communities (e.g. co-housing, community land trusts, the community of Gaviotas located in Columbia, and Evangeline in P.E.I..).

Cities are human built environments which are intended to meet the needs of large and highly concentrated human populations. Increasingly they are becoming dysfunctional and it is timely to consider what some of the key problems are and how they might be addressed. We will direct our attention to ecocities as well as megacities. and consider such experiments as underway in the Brazilian cities of Porto Alegre, Curitiba, Belo Horizonte. We will look at the proposition that economic justice and sustainable human communities will not be possible until we implement an alternative to capitalism with values and principles that foster fundamentally different social relations and better serve the larger community of life. Kovel suggests an ecosocialism, Albert argues for participatory economics (Parecon), and Hahnel calls for equitable cooperation.

One of the key challenges confronting the grass-roots community approach to social reconstruction is how the various local communities would be connected to each other and how they might be connected to the larger social structure of the global political economy. We will consider the Emilian model in operation in Italy, the Panchayat Raj model of India, and the Mondragon experiment in the Basque region of Spain. This exploration will provide us with an opportunity to reflect on the potential and the limits of community and larger scale social reconstruction.

In sum, our task is to gather up the ideas developed throughout the course in order to assess whether there is an alternative to capitalism, how it might operate, and how it might be introduced. All in all, this course provides an opportunity to reflect on what fundamental social and community reconstruction would entail.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Students will be evaluated by way of the following activities:

> First Take Home Assignment - 30%
>
> In Class Test   - 20%
>
> Second Take Home Assignment   - 20%
>
> Third Take Home Assignment   - 30%

The test is 50 minute essay type. The question for the test will be provided at least one week in advance of the test. There will be handouts with specific instructions for each of the take home assignments.

Students who fail to write the test on the assigned date will receive a grade of F for that part of the course grade unless an alternative date has been agreed to by the instructor. Such arrangements should be made in advance whenever possible. Missed tests must be rescheduled within 7 days of the above published dates. Rescheduled tests will only be permitted for good reasons. If the take-home assignment is not handed in on time, and prior arrangements for late submission have not been made, I will not accept it and you will receive a grade of F for that part of the course grade.

DUE DATES AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

FIRST ASSIGNMENT   **February 2nd due date**

READINGS: Browswimmer, (entire book)

Cavanaugh/Mander, (entire book)

IN CLASS TEST   **February 23rd**

READINGS: Barnes, (entire book)

SECOND ASSIGNMENT   **March 13th due date**

READING: Weisman, (entire book)

VOLUNTARY WITHDRAWAL DATE - March 19th

THIRD ASSIGNMENT   **April 8th due date**

READINGS: Register (entire book)

GRADING PROCEDURES

The following description of my grading scheme should make it possible for you to calculate your final grade in the course. You are urged to make your own computations to ensure that I have not made an error.

I find the normal grading system too constraining, so I have modified it to a limited extent by introducing the minus grade (e.g. A-, B-, C-). In the final grade submitted, however, I must conform to the university scheme.

Your answers are being evaluated on a letter grade system, not on a point system which is converted to a letter grade. The main benchmarks for the grade ranges can be described as follows:

D/F=   an answer which is factually weak, faulty analysis, and very poor organization.

C=   an answer which is mostly complete in terms of facts but suffers from poor analysis, organization and integration. Knowing the facts is a good start, but only a beginning.

B=   answer is factually accurate and mostly complete as well as organized and integrated.

A=   answer factually complete, well organized, sophisticated analysis which demonstrates a good degree of comprehension.

There is no grading curve used in the evaluation of our answers, as class could do very well or very poorly, I feel no obligation to artificially manipulate the distribution into a bell curve. Each letter grade has been assigned a numerical value to allow for averaging and the calculation of a final grade. The numerical value has been assigned to convert the letter grade into an interval scale. Thus a C$\neq$ 30% rather a C is equi-distant from a C+ (4) and a C- (2) on the scale; a C is a factually complete answer which suffers from limited analysis. Mechanically, you assign each of your letter grades the comparable numerical weight in your calculation in the following way:

A+ = 10	B+ = 7	C+ = 4	D = 1
A = 9	B = 6	C = 3	F = 0
A- = 8	B- = 5	C- = 2	

On a test with two questions, which received a letter grade of A- and C+, your average grade is 8 + 4 ÷ 2 = 6 or B. I take all of your tests and assignments and calculate them together, as weighted

by their relative value and derive a final numerical value for the course. The final cutting points for your letter grade are very important, because the minus grades must now disappear. They give you a higher final numerical grade because a weak A answer was an A- instead of a B+. But in the final analysis, all A- grades would become a B+. You would need some A or A+ grades to pull you over the cutting point. The cutting points are:

A+ (9.6 - 10) exceptional

A   (8.3 - 9.5) excellent

B+ (6.6 - 8.2) very good

B   (5.3 - 6.5) good

C+ (3.6 - 5.2) satisfactory

C   (2.3 - 3.5) adequate

D   (0.5 - 2.2) marginal

F   (0.0 - 0.4) failure

This grading scheme gives you the benefit of the buoyancy of the minus grade. If you fail to make it over a threshold, even by a fraction, it is unlikely that I will raise your grade unless you have shown significant improvement over the term; have submitted an exceptional piece of work, or have made positive contributions to class discussion. Otherwise, an 8.24 will remain a B+ and not an A.

Student Responsibility and Academic Integrity

I encourage collaborative and cooperative work ethics. Feel free to discuss your thoughts with other members of the class and thereby develop your comprehension and critical analysis. But remember, when it is time to submit your assignments, do your own work. The written material of your colleagues is the fruit of their labour and under no circumstances should you avail yourself of it when preparing your own answers. Likewise the printed work of other scholars must be properly recognized. You should acquaint yourself with the University's policy on

"Plagiarism and Cheating" (page 27) and " Personations at Examination" (page 28 in the University of Manitoba 2008-09 Undergraduate Calendar). Note especially the following statement: "...**students are expected to acknowledge the sources of ideas and expressions they use in their written work, whether quoted directly or paraphrased**", and "To provide adequate documentation is not only an indication of academic honesty but also a courtesy which enables the reader to consult your sources with ease. Failure to do so constitutes plagiarism." The Faculty of Arts also reserves the right to submit student work that is suspected of being plagiarized to internet sites designed to detect plagiarism.

Disruptions due to excessive talking or early departures form the classroom are especially distracting in large classes. Please be considerate and respectful of the needs and rights of others

in the class. Students should be aware that persistent disruption may result in debarment from the course. Any student who has a legitimate reason for leaving class early should inform the instructor at the beginning of class.

The new Aurora student system is currently experiencing difficulty in determining whether you have the proper pre-requisites for this course (which is a grade of C or better in Introduction to Sociology). If you do not, withdraw now. If you continue and I learn that you are here without the proper pre-requisite, I will debar you from the class and enter F grades for any outstanding work. You have been notified during the course registration process that it is your responsibility to ensure that you have the proper pre-requisites.