Sociology 6007: FOUNDATIONS IN ENVIRONMENTAL SOCIOLOGY

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Graduate Seminar
Spring Semester 2015
Tuesdays 3:30-6:00; LIBR M498

COURSE DESCRIPTION

I have designed this course to introduce graduate students to the field of environmental sociology. We will spend the first ten weeks of class getting acquainted with major areas of debate in environmental sociology through ‘classic’ journal articles and synthetic review articles. In the last five weeks of the semester, we will then build upon this foundation by reading and critically evaluating five recent monographs.

Although I had sociology graduate students most in mind while designing this syllabus, the course will be useful for students in other graduate programs as well. As will become clear, environmental sociologists mingle with geographers, anthropologists, political scientists, ecologists, and other scholars who inhabit the broad world of environmental studies. Throughout the semester, we will discuss environmental sociology’s inherent multidisciplinarity at the same time that we interrogate its relationships with (and grounding in) the discipline of sociology.

I have several goals in this course. First, students will learn the basic contours of environmental sociology in terms of topics, arguments, tensions, major scholars, classic publications, and recent monographs. Second, students will become familiar with the scholarship of faculty and graduate students at CU-Boulder. Third, through applying foundational theoretical perspectives to current events, students will practice situating current events in terms of longstanding theoretical debates and evaluate the contemporary relevance of theories learned in class. Fourth, students will discuss the merits, protocol, and challenges of different types of publications (refereed journal articles, books, and policy or other outreach reports).

I should also note that I have focused the syllabus on many of the analytical frameworks that I have found to be most seminal and influential. However, it would be impossible to comprehensively survey this prolific field of work in one semester. Thus, with regret, I have had to leave out considerable work and numerous topics of debate.

Students should consider joining the Envirosoc and Envirograds listserves – both are sponsored by the American Sociological Association’s Environment and Technology Section. Find access to both of these listserves here: http://listserv.neu.edu/cgi-bin/wa?HOME

Acknowledgement: Numerous scholars’ past syllabi have helped me to construct this one. I am especially grateful to Fred Buttel, Michael Bell, Bill Freudenburg, Lori Hunter, and Brian Mayer.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

• Preparation and participation: Because each week’s readings are responses to and developments of readings we will have covered in prior weeks, it is imperative that you attend regularly and stay current with the reading assignments. Moreover, because this is a graduate reading seminar rather than a lecture-style course, you are expected to actively contribute to the discussions. I plan to lecture for a few minutes at the beginning and end of each class session, but otherwise you should expect the bulk of our
time to be spent in discussion as a group. Your regular participation and evident preparation will count for 25% of your final grade.

- **Questions and comments:** Each week, you are required to bring to class at least four discussion questions addressing that week’s readings; at least one of the questions must strive to integrate most or all of the week’s readings. These must be typed, proofread, formatted in 12-point font, and submitted in hard copy at the end of each class meeting. These will account for 10% of your final grade.

- **Student-led activities:** At least once during the semester, you must prepare a short class activity that relates to course material and lead us through the activity. You could bring in outside materials that relate to a course concept (e.g., a news article, video clip, movie trailer, song, or some other work of art) along with some discussion questions or prompts, do an interpretive dance, or direct us in some other activity. You all have wonderful classroom activity ideas that I won’t think of on my own, so this is your chance to spice up our class sessions, try out different teaching ideas, and apply course concepts to the broader world. In class, on the day you lead your activity, you must submit to me in hard copy a short (<1 page) summary of how you relate this activity to course concepts; this summary must be typed, proofread, formatted in 12-point font, and submitted in hard copy at the end of class on the day you do your activity. Your activity and summary will account for 5% of your final grade.

- **Reading reflection essays:** Three times during the semester, you are required to prepare a brief essay that reflects upon a particular theme in the readings. Each essay should clearly identify a particular theme you found interesting in the preceding three weeks of the course, develop a coherent argument about that theme, and develop your argument by using material covered in the preceding three weeks of the course. Each essay will account for 10% of your final grade. Essays should be 3-4 double spaced pages, professionally composed, coherently organized, proofread, typed in 12-point Times New Roman font, and formatted with 1-inch margins and page numbers. Within your essay, be sure to cite your sources using the following in-text citation format: (Smith 2007), or (Smith 2007: 1). Your end-of-text references list should be formatted according to the guidelines of the American Sociological Association, which I have posted to D2L. You must submit each essay as a Word document (.doc or .docx) to the appropriate dropbox on D2L by the date and time listed below.
  - Essay #1 due 2/10 at 3:30pm to D2L.
  - Essay #2 due 3/3 at 3:30pm to D2L.
  - Essay #3 due 3/31 at 3:30pm to D2L.

- **Final paper:** You are required to produce a final paper that meaningfully engages with one or more themes/topics from this course. You should design the assignment to be useful to your own needs (e.g., responses to one or more possible questions of an upcoming comprehensive exam; a field statement; literature review for a dissertation proposal; article for publication; or thought piece). That said, I do require that you situate your analysis within environmental sociology: in some way, identify how your paper fits into the field of environmental sociology and/or use your findings to critically reflect upon environmental sociology. I expect that your paper will be 10-20 pages (double-spaced), although the length is less important than the content and coherence. Your papers should be double-spaced, proofread, coherently organized, and thoughtfully composed.
  - You must submit to me a one-page proposal for your final paper by 3/31 in hard copy. You are welcome and encouraged to meet with me before this date to discuss your final paper ideas, and you are welcome and encouraged to submit your final paper proposal before this date. Your proposal will count for 5% of your final grade.
  - Your final paper is due by 5pm on May 5th to the dropbox on D2L. It will account for 25% of your final grade.
In sum, your grade will be based on the following:

- **Class participation**: 25%
- **Weekly discussion questions**: 10%
- **Student-led activity**: 5%
- **Reading reflection essays (3)**: 30%
- **Final paper proposal**: 5%
- **Final paper**: 25%

The following grading rubric is endorsed by the Sociology Department for its graduate program, and it explains how final grades in graduate seminars should be interpreted:

- **A**: Consistently performs well above expectations for the course
- **A-**: Performs above expectations for the course
- **B+**: Meets expectations for the course
- **B**: Occasionally performs below expectations for the course
- **B-**: Consistently performs below expectations for the course
- **C range**: Unsatisfactory work for a PhD student. Serious concerns regarding student progression toward degree.

If you have any questions or concerns, free to meet with me or email me!

**REQUIRED READINGS**

The following five books are **required** and can be purchased from the University Bookstore:


All other readings will be available as downloadable material to websites through the “Content” link of this course’s D2L website.

I **recommend** the following book (or an earlier edition of it) to students who have little prior experience with the debates covered in this course or who simply want an accessible, engaging overview of the concepts:

OUTLINE OF READINGS

January 13 (Week 1): Course Organization

(Introductions, discuss syllabus)

January 20 (Week 2): Introduction to Environmental Sociology


January 27 (Week 3): Realist-Constructionist Debates


February 3 (Week 4): Population Growth and the Environment


Diana Hummel, Susana Adamo, Alex de Sherbinin, Laura Murphy, Rimjhim Aggarwal, Leo Zulu, Jianguo Liu, Kyle Knight. 2012. Inter- and transdisciplinary approaches to population-environment research for sustainability aims: a review and appraisal. *Population and Environment*.

Lori Hunter. Reading TBA.

**February 10 (Week 5): Marxist Approaches in Environmental Sociology**

*Note: Essay #1 due today to D2L*


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


**February 17 (Week 6): Ecological Modernization**


February 24 (Week 7): Neoliberalization of Environmental Governance


March 3 (Week 8): Environmental Social Movements

*Note: Essay #2 due today to D2L*


March 10 (Week 9): Environmental Inequality and Justice


### March 17 (Week 10): Expertise, Uncertainty, and Public Participation in Science


### March 31 (Week 11): Environmental Attitudes, Climate Justice, and Environmental Privilege

*Note:* Essay #3 due today to D2L.

*Note:* Deadline for submitting proposal for final paper


### April 7 (Week 12): Political Economy of Oil

April 14 (Week 13): Population, Sustainability, Privilege, and Justice


April 21 (Week 14): Thinking Sociologically about Suburban Environments


April 28 (Week 15): Environments and Contested Bodies