

SOCIOLOGY 386: Environmental Sociology (Fall 2011)

Lecture:	Tuesday & Thursday; 8:00 a.m. – 9:15 a.m.
Lecture location:	Communications 1022
Professor:	Dr. Derek Christopher Martin
Office:	Faner 3424
Telephone:	(618) 453-7627
Email:	dmartin@siu.edu
Web:	http://sociology.siu.edu/faculty/fac_martin.html
Office Hours:	Monday thru Thursday: 10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m., and by appointment

Course Content and Organization:

This course will examine the various aspects of Environmental Sociology – human relationships to, and impacts on, the environment (and the inverse, the environments’ connection to, and impact on, societies). The course will be organized around the concept of *sustainability*. In their 1987 report, *Our Common Future*, the World Commission on Environment and Development defined sustainable development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” Over the course of the semester, with regard to sustainability, we will examine the production and consumption of resources (energy, food, water, etc.). We will also address such issues as social movements, environmental justice, consumerism, recreation and leisure, demography, politics, and religion. In fact, one of the main lessons I hope to explore is how the environment is connected to every facet of society, and vice versa.

“When we try to pick out anything by itself we find that it is bound fast by a thousand invisible cords that cannot be broken, to everything in the universe.”

[– John Muir](#)

The course will alternate between primarily a lecture format (typically on Tuesdays) and more of a seminar / discussion format (typically on Thursdays). We will also view several short movies, and I hope to have a guest speaker as well (and maybe even a field trip!).

Course Requirements:

This course meets twice each week (T & TH), seventy-five (75) minutes per class. You are expected to attend all classes, and you are expected to read all course materials. Beyond simply attending, however, you are also expected to participate in discussions. Class participation includes having read the course materials (**before class begins!**) and asking questions or making comments. When relevant, students are encouraged to enrich class discussions by bringing in current events, accounts from personal experiences, or other appropriate material from outside the class.

Rumination Log:

Over the course of the semester, beginning with the first day, students will maintain a **Rumination Log**. [*Ruminate: to calmly, yet intently, consider over time.*] The objective of the log, and the writing assignments with which you will fill it, is to provide a place and a purpose for you to do some deep thinking about the various issues we will explore. Much of the material is complex,

some of it is controversial, and none of it is the sort that lends itself to easy answers. The point is for you to “think often and seriously, for one tiny semester of your life, about this beautiful little blue planet that we all call ‘home’ – for illumination occurs through reflection, rather than memorization.” [Sherry Cable, University of Tennessee]

I believe that if you take these assignments seriously, and if you are honest and open with yourself, then at the end of the semester you will not be the same person that started it – you will have a more complete understanding of yourself, the environment, and their interdependence.

Examinations:

The examinations will consist primarily of short answer and essay questions, although I may include one or more multiple choice and/or true/false questions as needed. The exams will **NOT** be cumulative, although an understanding of certain key concepts will be necessary throughout the semester. Exams **MUST** be taken on the scheduled day; there will be **NO** make-up exams (except for those students with an **authorized** absence).

Term paper:

Students are responsible for writing a 12-15 page research paper that addresses a specific environmental problem. This will be a semester long project (concurrent with the other coursework), and students are required to meet several deadlines displaying their progress. For more information, see the last page of this syllabus.

Grading Criteria:

Your final course grade will be based on the following criteria:

Examination 1	13%
Examination 2	13%
Final Exam	14%
Rumination Log 1	10%
Rumination Log 2	10%
Term Paper	20%
Attendance/participation	20%

Students who earn 90% or more of the points will earn an “A.”

Students who earn 80% to 89% of the points will earn a “B.”

Students who earn 70% to 79% of the points will earn a “C.”

Students who earn 62% to 69% of the points will earn a “D.”

Students who fail to earn at least 62% of the points will earn an “F.”

Ethical Conduct:

Southern Illinois University at Carbondale is dedicated not only to learning, research, and the advancement of knowledge, but also to the development of ethically sensitive and responsible persons. The university seeks to achieve these goals through sound educational programs and policies governing individual conduct that encourage independence and maturity. By accepting membership in this university, an individual joins a community characterized by free expression, free inquiry, honesty, respect for others, and participation in constructive change. All rights and responsibilities exercised within this academic environment shall be compatible with these principles. An act of Academic Dishonesty is a breach of the student conduct code. Dishonesty

includes: 1. Plagiarism, representing the work of another as one's own work; 2. Preparing work for another that is to be used as that person's own work; 3. Cheating by any method or means; 4. Knowingly and willfully falsifying or manufacturing scientific or educational data and representing the same to be the result of scientific or scholarly experiment or research; 5. Knowingly furnishing false information to a university official relative to academic matters; 6. Soliciting, aiding, abetting, concealing, or attempting conduct in violation of this code. If you are in doubt or have questions regarding behavior that may constitute academic dishonesty, please consult with me or refer to the SIU Handbook. <http://policies.siu.edu/documents/StudentConductCodeFINALMay32011.pdf>

Acknowledging Differences:

During the semester students will have the opportunity to share thoughts, opinions, and beliefs about their life experiences. The differences in these perspectives that each student brings to the discussion will add to the richness of this course. Students should communicate in ways that acknowledge and respect such differences. While it is natural and expected that many of us will have differing opinions during our discussions, we must always respect our fellow students and the opinions they hold. I expect and **encourage** students to be critical of each other's ideas, but it is **UNACCEPTABLE** to be dismissive of and/or combative with other students in the class.

Classroom Decorum:

I have an obligation to maintain a classroom environment that allows each student to learn to the best of his or her capabilities. While I encourage students to ask questions and make comments in class, I will not tolerate or permit behavior that is disruptive, distracting, or demeaning. Actions that violate these norms will be treated seriously— after one warning you will be asked to leave. Also, if your cell phone must be on for medical, child care, or other reasons, please set it to silent or vibrate.

Americans with Disabilities (ADA) Statement:

Persons with disabilities requiring special accommodations to meet the expectations of this course are encouraged to bring this to the attention of the instructor(s) as soon as possible. Written documentation of the disability should be submitted during the first week of the semester along with a request for special accommodations. Contact the SIU Disability Support Services (DSS) to facilitate requests: Woody Hall B-150, Carbondale, IL 62901, Mail Code 4705
DSSsiu@siu.edu Ph: (618) 453-5738 Fax: (618) 453-5700 TTY: (618) 453-2293

Emergency Procedures:

Southern Illinois University Carbondale is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for study and work. Because some health and safety circumstances are beyond our control, we ask that you become familiar with the SIUC Emergency Response Plan and Building Emergency Response Team (BERT) program. Emergency response information is available on posters in buildings on campus and is available on the BERT website at <http://www.bert.siu.edu/>, Department of Public Safety's website www.dps.siu.edu/ (disaster drop down) and in the Emergency Response Guidelines pamphlet. Know how to respond to each type of emergency.

Instructors will provide guidance and direction to students in the classroom in the event of an emergency affecting your location. It is important that you follow these instructions and stay with your instructor during an evacuation or sheltering emergency. The Building Emergency Response

Team will provide assistance to your instructor in evacuating the building or sheltering within the facility.

Course Materials:

[Bell] = Bell, Michael Mayerfeld. 2011. *An Invitation to Environmental Sociology* (4th ed.). Pine Forge Press. ISBN: 9781412990530
[Website: <http://www.pineforge.com/bell4e/study/intro.htm>]

[Pollan] = Pollan, Michael. 2006. *Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*. Penguin Press. ISBN: 9780143038580

[Supp] = Supplementary Readings

Schedule of Topics & Readings:

WEEK 1: Introduction – What is Environmental Sociology?

8/23 Introduction

8/25 Environmental Problems and Society

Reading:

[Bell] Chapter 1 (pp. 1-38)

Debate: Non-human species have an intrinsic right to survive, even if their protection causes economic losses to people.

WEEK 2: Consumption and Materialism

8/30 Material Basis of the Human Condition

Reading:

[Bell] Chapter 2 (pp. 40-64)

9/1 The Treadmill of Consumption

Readings:

[Supp] O’Riordan; “Frameworks for Choice: Core Beliefs and the Environment”

[Supp] Simon; “Depression Chic — Shopping Our Way to Recovery”

[Supp] Kriege; “The Greenwashing of America”

Debate: Consumption connects us more than it divides us.

WEEK 3: Money and Machines

9/6 The Treadmill of Production

Reading:

[Bell] Chapter 3 (pp. 65-94)

9/8 Technological Somnambulism

Reading:

[Supp] Taking Sides Issue 10: Should Cars Be More Efficient?

Debate: Cars cause more problems than they solve; Cars cause as much inconvenience as convenience.

WEEK 4: Population and Development

9/13 The Malthusian Argument

Reading:

[Bell] Chapter 4 (pp. 95-122)

9/15 Critiques of Malthusianism

Reading:

[Supp] Issue 2, “Is Sustainable Development Compatible with Human Welfare?”

Debate: Malthus’s population reduction is the best solution to improve the environment.

WEEK 5: Body and Health,”

9/20 The “Invironment”

Reading:

[Bell] Chapter 5 (pp. 123-145)

9/22 Environmental Justice

Readings:

[Supp] Auyero and Swistun; “Amidst Garbage and Poison: An Essay on Polluted Peoples and Places”

[Supp] Edwards; “An Ounce of Precaution”

Debate: The greatest good for the greatest number is the only workable principle of justice.

WEEK 6:

9/27 **EXAM 1**

9/29 **Video:** Dr. Seuss’s *The Lorax*

WEEK 7: The Ideology of Environmental Domination

10/4 Ideology

Reading:

[Bell] Chapter 6 (pp. 148-168)

10/6 Environmental Domination

Reading:

[Supp] Laszewski; “The Sociologists’ Take on the Environment”

Debate: The Protestant Ethic led to the environmental domination of the West.

WEEK 8: The Ideology of Environmental Concern

10/11 **FALL BREAK HOLIDAY: NO CLASS**

10/13 Environmental Concern
Reading:
[Bell] Chapter 7 (pp. 169-200)

WEEK 9: The Human Nature of Nature

10/18 Nature as a Social Construction
Reading:
[Bell] Chapter 8 (pp. 201-226)

10/20 Dialogue of Nature and Ideology
Reading:
[Supp] Brick; “Determined Opposition: The Wise Use Movement Challenges Environmentalism”
Debate: Ronald Inglehart’s scale of materialism/post-materialism.

WEEK 10: The Rationality of Risk,”

10/25 Rational Risk Assessment
Reading:
[Bell] Chapter 9 (pp. 227-252)

10/27 Risk and Democracy
Reading:
[Supp] Grant et al.; “Bringing the Polluters Back In”
Debate: The modern life is riskier than it was 100 years ago.

WEEK 11:

11/1 **EXAM II**

11/3 **Field trip:** Neighborhood Co-Op

WEEK 12: *The Omnivore’s Dilemma: Industrial Corn*

11/8 “The Plant: Corn’s Conquest”
Reading:
[Pollan] Intro & Chapters 1-3 (pp. 1-64)

11/10 “The Feedlot: Making Meat”
Reading:
[Pollan] Chapters 4-7 (pp. 65-119)

WEEK 13: *The Omnivore’s Dilemma: Pastoral Grass*

11/15 “All Flesh is Grass”
Reading:

[Pollan] Chapters 8-10 (pp. 123-207)

11/17 “The Animals: Practicing Complexity”

Reading:

[Pollan] Chapters 9-14 (pp. 208-273)

WEEK 14: *The Omnivore’s Dilemma: The Forest*

11/22 “The Perfect Meal”

Reading:

[Pollan] Chapters 15-20 (pp. 277-411)

11/24 **THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY: NO CLASS**

WEEK 15: Mobilizing the Ecological Society

11/29 Mobilizing Ecological Conceptions and Connections

Reading:

[Bell] Chapter 10 (pp. 254-278)

12/1 The Tragedy of the Commons

Readings:

[Supp] Hardin, “The Tragedy of the Commons”

[Supp] Crows, “Tragedy of the Commons Revisited”

Debate: Tragedy of the Commons.

WEEK 16: Governing the Ecological Society

12/6 Virtual Environmentalism

Reading:

[Bell] Chapter 11 (pp. 279-304)

12/8 The Reconstitution of Daily Life

Debate: Capitalism can never really be green.

FINAL EXAM – Thursday, Dec 15th, 10:10 a.m. – 12:10 p.m.

Term Paper:

First and foremost, this is a research paper; after choosing a topic, you must use outside readings to develop and refine your discussion. You will select an environmental problem (climate change, hunger, water, deforestation, etc.), and then discuss its causes, its consequences, and/or its solutions. Alternatively, you can conduct library research on a single environmental catastrophe such as Chernobyl, Three Mile Island, Exxon Valdez Oil Spill, Hurricane Katrina, Love Canal, BP Gulf Oil Spill, and so forth, again reporting on the causes, consequences, and solutions. Whether you address one, two, or all three aspects depends on the level of depth to which you choose to explore.

In analyzing the cause, you may want to consider some or all of the following: What is the history of the problem? Has this always been a problem? If not, when did the problem first arise? (Perhaps it has always been a problem, but has only recently been *recognized* as a problem.) Has the severity of the problem fluctuated over time? If so, what has caused the ups and downs? Is there a particular ideology or belief system that helps sustain the cause(s)?

In analyzing the consequences, you may want to address one or more of the following questions: Is this problem widespread, or does it affect only an isolated (economically, racially, socially, etc.) population? Is the severity of the problem universally recognized, or is its impact diluted, dispersed, and/or disguised? Is the problem getting better, worse, or remaining relatively constant? What are the potential benefits of alleviating the problem? What are the potential dangers of allowing it to remain (fester) or to worsen?

In analyzing the solution, you may want to address one or more of the following questions: What, if any, are some of the solutions that have been tried in the past? Why did they fail, or if they succeeded, then why does the problem persist? Were some solutions more successful than others, and if so, then why? Is the solution primarily individual, societal, or governmental? Is the nature of the solution social, moral, philosophical, technological, or something else (or some combination)? Is the persistence of the problem due to a lack of knowledge, or the lack of will to implement the knowledge? How does ideology impact the lack of knowledge (or the lack of will to implement)?

Your papers must be written in standard essay format (introduction, body, & conclusion), and you will be graded on both substance and style. They should be between twelve (12) and fifteen (15) pages, not including a separate page for references. You must use *at least* five (5) outside sources: scientific or academic books, journals, magazines, and or online archives. You may also use non-academic sources, but a significant portion of your paper must be based on the scholarly sources. Topics **must** be approved by the instructor (me!) no later than **November 8th**; a list of intended sources **must** be submitted by **November 22nd**; and the papers are due on **Thursday, December 8th, 2011**. In addition to a hard copy, papers **MUST** be submitted to Turnitin.com.