CORE ISSUES IN ENVIRONMENTAL SOCIOLOGY  
Sociology 534  
Fall 2013  

University of Arizona  
Department of Sociology  

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Course Overview  

This environmental sociology course is designed to provide students with a thorough, comprehensive understanding of the key theories, literature, and issues in environmental sociology. It is most appropriate for Ph.D. students seeking further research in environmental sociology, as well as graduate students and advanced undergraduates with a strong interest in studying the environment/society nexus.  

The course has multiple goals. First, it seeks to provide a survey of readings on core issues in ERS, and thus serve as the foundation for a larger reading list by graduate students specializing in environmental sociology. Second, it affords an opportunity for graduate students to engage in core environmental sociology issues by leading weekly discussions in which mutual education occurs via social learning. And third, the course provides graduate students the chance to write and present a paper on a relevant environmental sociology topic. The class also incorporates a peer review component to familiarize graduate students with the peer review process used at scholarly journals and increasingly academic conferences.  

Learning Objectives  

By the end of the course, students will be expected to have achieved the following:  
1) Demonstrate familiarity of the motivating context in which environmental sociology emerged as a professional subfield of sociology.  
2) Define the major theoretical traditions utilized in environmental sociology.  
3) Synthesize the multiple subareas within environmental sociology and understand their origins, connections, and divergences.  
4) Apply the core theoretical traditions and related research fields in environmental sociology to a contemporary environmental problem through the development of a research paper and presentation.
Required Materials

All readings have been selected on the basis of (among other things) their availability via the web. Therefore, there is no reading packet or book to buy. This is for cost containment, paper conservation, and to focus on primary literature. The readings are available on D2L.

Grading

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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<tr>
<td>Attendance and participation in discussions</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentations of readings</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individual project</td>
<td>35%</td>
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<td>Comments on individual projects</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Project presentation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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Final Grade

**Percentage**

- A 90-100%
- B 80-89%
- C 74-76%
- D 64-66%
- E below 60%

Attendance and Participation in Discussions. Since the objective of this course is to engage students of sociology in an exchange of sociological ideas, attendance is crucial in order to have a diversity of perspectives represented. I will informally take attendance and encourage contributions from everyone, not to put people on the spot but to broaden discussion.

Presentations of Readings. Depending on how many people are in this class, you will be asked to lead discussions 2-3 times during the course of the semester. I will elicit your preferences early in the course and assign people to present according to those preferences, as feasible. Each week, you and 1-2 other people will present. You need to go through all of the readings and meet with the other presenters to decide how best to coordinate your presentations. It is up to you and the other presenters for that week to decide how best to structure your presentations (in terms of their order; all at once, one at a time followed by discussion, etc.). You are welcome to incorporate other reading material (though the rest of the class is not required to read it) and your own experiences. In class, each person is expected to present. Your presentation should run about 15 minutes, and emphasize the underlying assumptions, implications, advances and oversights of the ideas.
in the reading, rather than just a straight summary. Presentations are intended to stimulate discussion, so you must conclude your presentation with 2-4 discussion questions.

**Individual Project.** This course covers a variety of topics, but it is nonetheless selective. Therefore, you are expected to develop an individual project paper on a topic of your choice. The topic can be one from among the assigned readings, but your project needs to go beyond that and provide a more in-depth examination. The choice of topic is up to you, but you must send me a title and abstract before proceeding *(see the course schedule for deadlines)*. The topic can be highly theoretical or applied, and can come from your own research. If you are not sure what you want to do, take a look at the course schedule, skim some of the readings, do some on-line searches, talk to your colleagues, and/or consult me. Once I’ve approved the abstract, your task is to produce a paper of ~20-25 pages of text double-spaced (plus tables, references, etc.). Drafts of project papers are due to me by e-mail one week before they are to be presented *(see course schedule for deadlines)*. This will allow everyone a chance to see the papers prior to their presentation.

**Comments on Individual Projects.** You will be assigned two project papers written by others to read and make comments for the author. This will be randomized, so you may have to write one comment on each of two consecutive weeks, or two comments for the same week, depending on when the paper authors are to present. The comments should be ~2 pages, double-spaced. *Send your comments to the author and to me via e-mail.* Comments are due at 5 PM two days before the author is to present their project paper *(i.e. the Wednesday before the Friday when the author presents)*.

**Project Presentation.** During the last two class meetings, everyone will present their project paper. *Sign-up for paper presentations is first-come, first served.* This is important, for it determines when your paper draft is due, and when your commentators need to write their comments. Project presentations should follow the guidelines for presentations of readings. That is, they should run ~15 minutes, highlight implications, and conclude with questions. We’ll then allow ~15 minutes for discussion of the project paper. Commentators are especially encouraged but not required to contribute.

**Policies and Services**

Cheating is unethical, and as such, will not be tolerated under any circumstances. **Plagiarism, whether it be from your fellow student’s work or professional publications, in any form for the research paper and exams will result in an automatic F for that assignment and appropriate institutional action will be taken.** There should be no need to cheat. My goal is to help you perform well in this course and if you need information about how to do well on assignment, I will always be available to you. For further information on the Student Code of Academic Integrity, see: [http://deanofstudents.arizona.edu/codeofacademicintegrity](http://deanofstudents.arizona.edu/codeofacademicintegrity)

A note on classroom behavior: please endeavor to be at class on time. If you must be late, enter the classroom quietly without disruption. Use of cell phones, texting, and browsing
the internet, should you bring a laptop, is not allowed. Please be respectful in your comments and courteous to your fellow students and the instructor.

The University seeks to promote a safe environment where students and employees may participate in the educational process without compromising their health, safety or welfare. The Arizona Board of Regents’ Student Code of Conduct, ABOR Policy 5-308, prohibits threats of physical harm to any member of the University community, including to one’s self. Threatening behavior can harm and disrupt the University, its community and its families. For further information please see: [http://policy.web.arizona.edu/threatening-behavior-students](http://policy.web.arizona.edu/threatening-behavior-students)

Please note that the information contained in the course syllabus, other than the grade and absence policies, may be subject to change with reasonable advance notice, as deemed appropriate by the instructor.

**Absence Policies**

Attendance in this graduate seminar is required. Participation in the discussion of each week’s material is essential to the student’s learning process. While we all have individual lives outside of the classroom, I expect you to make the highest effort in attending class. If you must miss a class meeting, please notify me in advance. Missing two or more class meetings will reduce your participation grade by half.

All holidays or special events observed by organized religions will be honored for those students who show affiliation with that particular religion and not affect your participation grade. Please notify the instructor in advance. In addition, absences pre-approved by the UA Dean of Students (or Dean’s designee) will be honored.

**Accessibility and Accommodations**

It is the University's goal that learning experiences be as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience physical or academic barriers based on disability, please let me know immediately so that we can discuss options. You are also welcome to contact Disability Resources (520-621-3268) to establish reasonable accommodations.

Please be aware that the accessible table and chairs in this room should remain available for students who find that standard classroom seating is not usable.
COURSE SCHEDULE AND READINGS
CORE ISSUES IN ENVIRONMENTAL SOCIOLOGY

Week 1 – August X – Introductions

Introduction

Syllabus

Week 2 – August X – Antecedents and Influences on ERS

Human Ecology


Political Ecology


Ecological Marxism


Week 3 – September X – The Emergence and Status of ERS

Beginnings and Reflections


Critiques and Debates


Week 4 – September X – Population and Sustainability


Week 5 – September X – Theory, part 1: Constructionism and Realism

Constructionism and Critiques of Realism


**Critiques of Constructionism**


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**Week 6 – September X – Theory, part 2: Treadmills and Ecological Modernization**

**Treadmills**


**Ecological Modernization**


**Week 7 – October X – Theory Part 3: Recent Proposals for New Directions (and Critiques)**

**Risk Society**


**Environmental Flows**


Hierarchy Theory


Week 8 – October X – Environmental Concern: Differentials, Debates, and Other Issues

Attitudes and Behaviors


Post-Materialism in Question


Findings regarding Climate Change


Other Issues


Week 9 – October X – Social Movements and Environmental Mobilization


**Week 10 – October X – Gender Inequality and Ecofeminism**

**Overviews**


**Ecofeminism in Debate**


**Empirical Studies**


Week 11 – November X – Environmental Hazards and Environmental Justice

Environmental Hazards and Responses to Disasters


Environmental Justice


Week 12 – November X – Institutions and Environmental Governance


**Optional Reading for the Resolute:**


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**Week 13 – November X – Development and Globalization; Rural/Urban Land Use and Climate Change**


**Week 14 – November X – No Class, Thanksgiving**

**Week 15 – November X – Student Paper Presentations, Part 1**

**Week 16 – December X – Student Paper Presentations, Part 2**

*December X – Final Papers Due*