

ENS216: Introduction to Environmental Sociology

E-learning course

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Course description and requirements

This course introduces many of the major schools of thought and topics of research in the field of environmental sociology, and presents a historical overview of the development of environmental sociological theory and praxis over time. The course consists of weekly thematic modules which typically include textbook and other readings, multimedia lectures, and graded activities. Students should read the assigned chapters in the course textbook and use the Moodle e-learning program to read the supplemental literature, which will be available electronically in PDF and/or Word format.

This is an e-learning course which will require as much time and effort from students as a traditional classroom lecture course. Because this course will be taught via the Internet using e-learning methods, rather than as a lecture course in a physical classroom, students are expected to be comfortable using computer hardware and software, and to be comfortable doing reading, research, and writing independently. It is possible that you will not meet the instructor or other students in person. The instructor will make every effort to provide information and support to make your experience of the online learning environment educational.

Students must be proficient in English, and this course is an opportunity for you to practice English. Students are encouraged to ask the instructor if they have any questions about the language or cultural references in the literature. Students must also have regular access to a computer and high-speed Internet connection, and be proficient in the use of various software applications, including word processing, e-mail, Internet searching, and use of multimedia programs such as Real Player, Windows Media Player, Google Video, and Youtube. Students need an Internet browser, such as Microsoft Internet Explorer, Netscape, Opera, or Firefox, to connect to the online course content. Lectures are provided using Microsoft Office PowerPoint. Most course materials will be delivered to students using the Moodle e-learning program. Reading materials posted on Moodle or sent to students are for class use only, not for distribution.

Using Moodle

Class resources are available to students through the Philosophy Faculty's Moodle e-learning system. This system is used to post resources such as the syllabus, supplemental literature, and information about assignments and the seminar schedule. Students can login to Moodle at <http://www.phil.muni.cz/elf>. Course materials are listed under the title, "ENS216: Introduction to Environmental Sociology." It is possible you may need to make a POP3 password to access the Moodle system. This can be done at this address: <https://is.muni.cz/auth/system/heslo.pl#pop>. Please contact the instructor with any questions or concerns about using Moodle.

Assignments and grading policy

The course is based on the textbook *An invitation to environmental sociology* (2nd edition) by Michael Mayerfeld Bell (ISBN 0761987754). At least one copy should be reserved for you to read in the university library.

Each week's study will typically involve required readings, viewing of lecture materials and required videos, taking the weekly quiz, and completing a short writing assignment. It is advised that each week students fulfill the required activities in the following order: 1) read the assigned literature and watch any required videos, 2) take the weekly quiz, and 3) write the short essay. The weekly quiz, accessible via Moodle, may include questions about the lecture and any required reading or videos for that week. Essays submitted late will receive reduced grades.

A 2000-2500 word research essay is due at the end of the semester. Students should use ISO 690 standards for referencing written and electronic sources of information (see "Writing resources" on the Moodle page for more information).

Students will receive a final letter grade (A-F) based on the following components:

Final grade components

30% – Weekly quizzes
30% – Short essay assignments
40% – Final essay

Final grade scale

A = 90 – 100%
B = 80 – 90%
C = 70 – 80%
D = 60 – 70%
E = 50 – 60%
F = <50%

E-mail policy

Communicating with the instructor by e-mail is an important part of this course, since there is no classroom contact. To ask questions, make comments, and submit written assignments, you will need to send e-mail to the instructor. Students may contact the instructor at any time by e-mail with questions about the course. I will reply to your questions within 48 hours of receipt of your e-mail. The file type to be used for sending essays as e-mail attachments is Microsoft Word. If you need to send files in some other format, please contact me first to make sure it is acceptable.

Virtual office hours

I will be available for consultation via real-time chat every Wednesday afternoon from 14.00-16.00 to answer questions about the course. During these “virtual office hours,” you may chat with me by Skype, Windows messenger, or Yahoo IM. Contact me in advance by e-mail to schedule a chat during my virtual office hours, and I will provide my contact information.

Academic honesty

The Faculty of Social Studies at MU expects students to know the study rules and maintain academic honesty by refraining from plagiarism and from cheating during exams. Plagiarism means that one presents other peoples’ ideas as one’s own and does not credit the author. Plagiarism is one of the most serious breaches of ethical standards in the academic environment, for it denies the mission of the university and the meaning of studying. From a legal perspective, plagiarism is the stealing of intellectual property.

Academic dishonesty is not tolerated under any circumstances at FSS. Each case of such cheating will be punished by the most serious sanction, **unconditional expulsion from the university**. We recommend that students become thoroughly acquainted with the problem of plagiarism and how to avoid it. If you have questions about plagiarism, please contact the instructor. When writing assignments, give a proper citation for an author when you quote or paraphrase his/her writing and ideas.

Weekly schedule

September 17 – September 23	E-learning and course orientation
	<p>Lecture files:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Welcome to the MU-HiL e-learning program• Explanation of syllabus, grading policy, student expectations, etc. <p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Skills questionnaire & introductions
September 24 – September 30	Introduction to environmental sociology
	<p>Lecture files:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduction to Environmental Sociology <p>Required reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bell Chapter 1: Environmental problems and society• Giddens: Sociology and the environment <p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Week 2 quiz• Week 2 short essay assignment

**October 1 –
October 7**

Consumption, materialism, and modern society

Lecture files:

- Consumption, materialism, and modern society

Required reading:

- Bell: Consumption and materialism (Chapter 2)
- Slater: Themes from the sociology of consumption
- Union of Concerned Scientists: The consumer's guide to effective environmental choices (chapter 1)

Required video:

- Mathis Wackernagel: The ecological footprint
- Barry Schwartz: The paradox of choice

Activities:

- Week 3 quiz
- Week 3 short essay assignment

**October 8 –
October 14**

The treadmill of production

Lecture files:

- ToP theory

Required reading:

- Bell: Money and machines (Chapter 3)
- Buttel: The treadmill of production

Activities:

- Week 4 quiz
- Week 4 short essay assignment

**October 15 –
October 21**

Reading week: Marx and the environment

Required reading:

- Dickens: Marx and the environment
- Murphy: Environmental accountability under state socialism
- Burkett: On some common misconceptions about nature and Marx

Activities:

- Week 5 quiz

**October 22 –
October 28**

Sustainability

Lecture files:

- Sustainability

Required reading:

- Bell: Population and development (Chapter 4)
- Prugh and Assadourian: What is sustainability, anyway?
- Interview with Julian Simon

Required video:

- Vandana Shiva: Defending biodiversity
- Patrick Holden: Sustainable agriculture



- Monsanto Company: Global benefits of plant biotechnology (youtube)
- Bonnie Bucqueroux: Curing America's eating disorder (youtube)

Activities:

- Week 6 quiz
- Week 6 short essay assignment

**October 29 –
November 4**

Health, environmental justice, and risk

Lecture files:

- Health, environmental justice, and risk

Required reading:

- Bell: Body and health (Chapter 5)
- Bell: Risk (Chapter 9)

Required video:

- Vyvyan Howard: The chemical industry and toxicology
- Vyvyan Howard: Rising cancer rates (parts 1 & 2)

Activities:

- Week 7 quiz
- Week 7 short essay assignment

**November 5 –
November 11**

Films about environmental justice

Lecture file:

- Introduction to this week's films

Required reading:

- Selva: Toxic shock
- Bullard: Can Americans trust the government to protect them?
- Slade: Electronic waste a ticking time bomb

Required videos:

- *The digital dump: Exporting high-tech re-use and abuse to Africa*
- *Exporting harm: The high-tech trashing of Asia*
- "Mountaintop removal" coal mining in the US Appalachian Mountains (youtube)
- Greenpeace: The Mexican electronics industry

Activities:

- Week 8 quiz
- Week 8 short essay assignment

**November 12 –
November 18**

Ideology of environmental domination

Lecture files:

- Ideology of environmental domination

Required reading:

- Bell: The ideology of environmental domination (Chapter 6)

Required video:

- A Rocha: Why should Christians care for creation?

Activities:

- Week 9 quiz
- Week 9 short essay assignment

**November 19 –
November 25**

Ideology of environmental concern

Lecture files:

- Ideology of environmental concern

Required reading:

- Bell: The ideology of environmental concern (Chapter 7)
- Buttel: Ecological modernization as social theory

Required video:

- Michael Braungart: “Cradle to cradle” design
- Remembering Rachel Carson

Activities:

- Week 10 quiz
- Week 10 short essay assignment

**November 26 –
December 2**

The social construction of nature

Lecture file:

- The social construction of nature

Required reading:

- Bell: The human nature of nature (Chapter 8)

Activities:

- Week 11 quiz
- Week 11 short essay

**December 3 –
December 9**

Sociological perspectives on global climate change

Lecture file:

- Introduction to *An inconvenient truth*

Required reading:

- Gore: Ten simple things you can do to help stop global warming
- Monbiot: Save the planet in 10 steps
- Cohen: Some inconvenient truths about the politics of environmental crisis
- Morris: What Al Gore hasn't told you about global warming
- Kelly: The hidden opportunity in global warming
- Šimůnek and Růžička: Vaclav Klaus on climate change
- Jackson: Insurance industry feels the heat of global warming

Required video:

- *An inconvenient truth*
- Interview with Bjorn Lomborg about climate change

Activities:

- Week 12 quiz
- Week 12 short essay

**December 10 –
December 16**

Peak oil and Western society

Lecture file:

- Introduction to *The end of suburbia* and peak oil theory

Required video:

- *The end of suburbia: Oil depletion and the collapse of the American dream*
- Colin Campbell: The future of oil
- Richard Heinberg: Peak oil (parts 1 & 2)

Required reading:

- ExxonMobil: Peak oil?
- Luttwak: The truth about global oil supply
- Worldwatch special section on peak oil

Activities:

- Week 13 quiz
- Week 13 short essay

**December 17 –
December 23**

Environmental problems and solutions

Lecture file:

- Addressing environmental problems as social problems

Required reading:

- Bell: Organizing the ecological society (Chapter 10)
- Kunstler: The long emergency
- Kennedy: Crimes against nature

Required video:

- Bill McKibben: "Proactive localism"
- Lester Brown: Creating a sustainable economy (parts 1 & 2)

Activities:

- Week 14 quiz
- Week 14 short essay

January 27, 2008

***** Final essay due 23.59 *****