

**SOC165: Introduction to Environmental Sociology**  
*E-learning course*

**Mgr. Benjamin Vail, M.Sc., Ph.D.**  
**Autumn 2009**

Credits: 6

Office hours: Tuesdays 10.00-11.00 in room 3.59

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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 research over time. The course consists of weekly thematic modules that typically include textbook and other readings, multimedia lectures, and graded activities. By the end of the semester, students will have an in-depth understanding of the development of environmental sociology as an academic discipline, gain knowledge about historical and contemporary environmental issues, and be able to critically analyze the material and ideal relationships between modern society and its biophysical environment.

Students should read the assigned chapters in the course textbook and use the IS e-learning system to read the supplemental literature, which is available electronically in PDF and/or Word format. Because this course is 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 able to study independently. Students must have regular access to a computer and high-speed Internet connection, and be proficient in the use of e-mail and multimedia programs such as Real Player, Windows Media Player, and Youtube. Students need an Internet browser to connect to the online course content. Lectures are provided using Microsoft Office PowerPoint. Students must be proficient in English, and this course is an opportunity for you to practice English. Educational materials posted on the IS or sent to students are for class use only, not for distribution.

**Using the MU Information System**

Class resources are available to students through Masaryk University's online Information System (IS). Under the course title "SOC165: Introduction to Environmental Sociology" you will find an interactive syllabus which contains important general information about the course and the weekly schedule with links to course materials. Please contact the instructor with any questions or concerns about using the IS. For technical questions about using the e-learning features of this course, you can contact the IS e-learning support office at [etech@fi.muni.cz](mailto:etech@fi.muni.cz).

**Evaluation**

Each week's study will typically involve required readings, viewing of lecture materials and required videos, and taking the weekly quiz. The weekly quiz, to be taken via the IS, may include questions about the lecture and any required reading or videos for that week.

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

**Final grade components**

20% – Weekly quizzes  
40% – Mid-term exam  
40% – Final exam

**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. 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. I usually do not read or respond to e-mail on weekends or holidays.

**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. The official FSS policy on academic honesty is available in the

course's interactive syllabus in IS in English and Czech. Academic dishonesty is not tolerated under any circumstances at FSS. The minimum penalty for academic dishonesty is expulsion from the course, a grade of F for the semester, and referral to the Faculty disciplinary committee.

## Weekly schedule

Sept 21-27	Introduction to Environmental Sociology	Week 1
<p>Lecture files:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcome to SOC165 – Explanation of syllabus, grading policy, etc.</li> <li>• Introduction to Environmental Sociology</li> </ul> <p>Required reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Syllabus</li> <li>• Bell Chapter 1: Environmental problems and society</li> <li>• Giddens: Sociology and the environment</li> <li>• McCarthy and King: Environmental problems require social solutions</li> </ul> <p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practice quiz</li> <li>• Chapter 1 quiz</li> </ul>		
Sept 28-Oct 4	Consumption, Materialism, and Modern Society	Week 2
<p>Lecture files:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consumption, materialism, and modern society</li> </ul> <p>Required reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bell: Consumption and materialism (Chapter 2)</li> <li>• Slater: Themes from the sociology of consumption</li> <li>• Union of Concerned Scientists: The consumer's guide to effective environmental choices (chapter 1)</li> </ul> <p>Required video:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mathis Wackernagel: The ecological footprint</li> <li>• Barry Schwartz: The paradox of choice</li> </ul> <p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 2 quiz</li> </ul>		
Oct 5-11	The Treadmill of Production	Week 3
<p>Lecture files:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ToP theory</li> </ul> <p>Required reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bell: Money and machines (Chapter 3)</li> <li>• Buttel: The treadmill of production</li> </ul> <p>Required video:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annie Leonard: The Story of Stuff</li> </ul> <p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 3 quiz</li> </ul>		

Oct 12-18	Sustainability	Week 4
<p>Lecture files:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainability</li> </ul> <p>Required reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bell: Population and development (Chapter 4)</li> <li>• Prugh and Assadourian: What is sustainability, anyway?</li> <li>• Interview with Julian Simon</li> </ul> <p>Required video:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vandana Shiva: Defending biodiversity</li> <li>• Patrick Holden: Sustainable agriculture</li> <li>• Monsanto Company: Global benefits of plant biotechnology (youtube)</li> <li>• Bonnie Bucqueroux: Curing America's eating disorder (youtube)</li> </ul> <p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 4 quiz</li> </ul>		
Oct 19-25	Health, Risk, and Environmental Justice	Week 5
<p>Lecture files:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health, environmental justice, and risk</li> </ul> <p>Required reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bell: Body and health (Chapter 5)</li> <li>• Bell: Risk (Chapter 9)</li> </ul> <p>Required video:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Future of Food</li> <li>• Vyvyan Howard: The chemical industry and toxicology</li> <li>• Vyvyan Howard: Rising cancer rates (parts 1 &amp; 2)</li> </ul> <p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapters 5 &amp; 9 quiz</li> </ul>		
Oct 26-Nov 1	Films About Environmental Justice	Week 6
<p>Required reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selva: Toxic shock</li> <li>• Bullard: Can Americans trust the government to protect them?</li> <li>• Slade: Electronic waste a ticking time bomb</li> </ul> <p>Required videos:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The digital dump: Exporting high-tech re-use and abuse to Africa</i></li> <li>• <i>Exporting harm: The high-tech trashing of Asia</i></li> <li>• "Mountaintop removal" coal mining in the US Appalachian Mountains (youtube)</li> <li>• Greenpeace: The Mexican electronics industry</li> </ul>		

<b>Nov 2-8</b>	<b>Reading Week: Marx and the Environment</b>	<b>Week 7</b>
<p>Required reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dickens: Marx and the environment</li> <li>• Murphy: Environmental accountability under state socialism</li> <li>• Burkett: On some common misconceptions about nature and Marx</li> <li>• O'Connor: Capitalism, nature, socialism</li> </ul> <p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marx quiz</li> </ul>		
<b>Nov 9-15</b>	<b>Ideology of Environmental Domination</b>	<b>Week 8</b>
<p>Lecture files:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ideology of environmental domination</li> </ul> <p>Required reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bell: The ideology of environmental domination (Chapter 6)</li> </ul> <p>Required video:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The 11<sup>th</sup> Hour</li> <li>• A Rocha: Why should Christians care for creation?</li> </ul> <p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 6 quiz</li> </ul>		
<b>Mid-Term Exam</b>		<b>Week 8</b>
<b>The date, time and room for the Mid-Term Exam will be announced later.</b>		
<b>Nov 16-22</b>	<b>Ideology of Environmental Concern</b>	<b>Week 9</b>
<p>Lecture files:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ideology of environmental concern</li> </ul> <p>Required reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bell: The ideology of environmental concern (Chapter 7)</li> <li>• Buttell: Ecological modernization as social theory</li> </ul> <p>Required video:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Michael Braungart: “Cradle to cradle” design</li> <li>• Remembering Rachel Carson</li> </ul> <p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 7 quiz</li> </ul>		
<b>Nov 23-29</b>	<b>The Social Construction of Nature</b>	<b>Week 10</b>
<p>Lecture file:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The social construction of nature</li> </ul> <p>Required reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bell: The human nature of nature (Chapter 8)</li> </ul> <p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 8 quiz</li> </ul>		

Nov 30-Dec 6	Sociological Perspectives on Global Climate Change	Week 11
<p>Required reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gore: Ten simple things you can do to help stop global warming</li> <li>• Monbiot: Save the planet in 10 steps</li> <li>• Cohen: Some inconvenient truths about the politics of environmental crisis</li> <li>• Morris: What Al Gore hasn't told you about global warming</li> <li>• Kelly: The hidden opportunity in global warming</li> <li>• Šimůnek and Růžička: Vaclav Klaus on climate change</li> <li>• Jackson: Insurance industry feels the heat of global warming</li> </ul> <p>Required video:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>An inconvenient truth</i></li> <li>• Interview with Bjorn Lomborg about climate change</li> </ul>		
Dec 7-13	Peak Oil and Modern Society	Week 12
<p>Required reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ExxonMobil: Peak oil?</li> <li>• Luttwak: The truth about global oil supply</li> <li>• Kunstler: The long emergency</li> <li>• Worldwatch special section on peak oil</li> </ul> <p>Required video:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The end of suburbia: Oil depletion and the collapse of the American dream</i></li> <li>• <i>Power of Community</i></li> <li>• Colin Campbell: The future of oil</li> <li>• Richard Heinberg: Peak oil (parts 1 &amp; 2)</li> </ul>		
Dec 14-20	Environmental Problems and Solutions	Week 13
<p>Lecture file:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Addressing environmental problems as social problems</li> </ul> <p>Required reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bell: Organizing the ecological society (Chapter 10)</li> <li>• Kennedy: Crimes against nature</li> <li>• York, Rosa and Dietz: The environmental consequences of modernity</li> </ul> <p>Required video:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>A Convenient Truth</i></li> <li>• Bill McKibben: Proactive localism</li> <li>• ACGA: Community gardens</li> </ul> <p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 10 quiz</li> </ul>		
<b>Final Exam</b>		
<b>The date, time and room for the Final Exam will be announced later.</b>		

**Literature**

No. of pages

Bell, M.M. 2004. *An introduction to Environmental Sociology* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.

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Brower, M. and Leon, W. "How Many Simple Things Do People Need to Do to Save the Planet?" Chapter 1 in <i>The Consumer's Guide to Effective Environmental Choices Practical Advice from the Union of Concerned Scientists</i> . Three Rivers Press.	~20
Bullard, R. Can Americans trust the government to protect them? Lessons from the World Trade Center ground zero and the aftermath of Katrina. CommonDreams.org, September 11, 2006.	~4
Burkett, Paul. 1996. "On some common misconceptions about nature and Marx's critique of political economy." <i>Capitalism-Nature-Socialism</i> . Volume 7, pp. 57-80.	24
Buttel, F.H. 2004. "The Treadmill of Production: An Appreciation, Assessment, and Agenda for Research," <i>Organization &amp; Environment</i> 17(3):323-336.	15
Cohen, M. Some inconvenient truths about the politics of environmental crisis. Counterpunch.org, February 2, 2007.	~8
Dickens, Peter. 1997. "Beyond sociology: Marxism and the environment." Pages 179-194 in M. Redclift and G. Woodgate (editors). <i>International Handbook of Environmental Sociology</i> . London: Edward Elgar.	15
ExxonMobil. 2007. "Peak Oil? Contrary to the theory, oil production shows no sign of a peak."	1
Giddens, A. 2006. "The Environment and Risk," pp. 936-969 in <i>Sociology</i> . 5 <sup>th</sup> ed. Cambridge: Polity Press.	30
Gore, A. "Ten simple things you can do to help stop global warming." DVD cover for "An Inconvenient Truth."	1
Jackson, D. Z. 2006. Insurance industry feels the heat of global warming. <i>The Boston Globe</i> newspaper, March 15.	~2
Kelly, M. 2006. The hidden opportunity in global warming, Altnet.org. December 21.	~4
Kennedy, R.F., Jr. 2003. "Crimes Against Nature," <i>Rolling Stone</i> Magazine, December 11.	~20
Kunstler, J.H. 2005. "The long emergency," <i>Rolling Stone</i> magazine, March 24.	~8
Luttwak, E. N. 2005. The truth about global oil supply. <i>The First Post</i> , August 11.	~4
McCarthy, D. and L. King. 2005. pp.xi-xxx in <i>Environmental sociology: From analysis to action</i> . New York: Rowman & Littlefield.	20
Monbiot, G. 2006. Save the planet in 10 steps. <i>The Guardian</i> newspaper (UK), October 30.	~4
Morris, D. 2006. What Al Gore hasn't told you about global warming. Altnet.org, January 9.	~6
Murphy, Raymond. 1994. "Environmental accountability under state socialism" in <i>Rationality and Nature</i> . Westview Press, pp. 149-157.	8
O'Connor, J. (1988) Capitalism, nature, socialism: A theoretical introduction. <i>Capitalism, Nature, Socialism</i> 1:11-38.	28
Prugh, Thomas and Erik Assadourian. 2003. "What is sustainability, anyway?" <i>World Watch</i> Magazine, pp. 10-21.	12
Selva, M. 2006. Toxic shock: How Western rubbish is destroying Africa. <i>The Independent</i> newspaper (UK), September 21.	~4
Simon, J. and Buckley, W.F. 1982. "Answer to Malthus? Julian Simon Interviewed by William Buckley." <i>Population and Development Review</i> 8(1):205-218.	14
Šimůnek, P. and Růžička, 2007. M. Klaus: Radar yes, when ... <i>Hospodářské noviny</i> . February 14.	~4

Slade, G. 2006. Electronic waste a ticking time bomb. *The Seattle Post-Intelligencer* newspaper, April 13. ~2

Slater, D. 1998. "Themes from the sociology of consumption," Paper presented at the Consumption, Environment, and the Social Sciences Seminar, 6-7 July. ~12

Worldwatch special section on peak oil. Pages 9-24 in *WorldWatch* Magazine, January/February 2006. 16

Total number of assigned pages: ~640