

The Ideology of Environmental Domination

Lecture Part 1

SOC165

Spring 2010



This Week's Topic

- Switch focus from the material to the ideal
- The ideology of environmental domination
- Why do individuals behave in ways that hurt the environment? Why does society organize activity that harms the environment?
- One answer: Because of ideologies of environmental domination – the belief that humans are entitled to use nature



This Week's Lecture

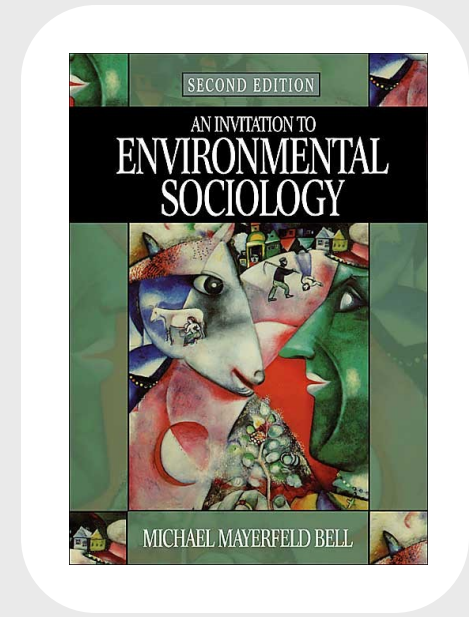
1. Religious History
2. Individualism
3. Patriarchy
4. HEP-NEP in Environmental Sociology



This Week's Required Materials

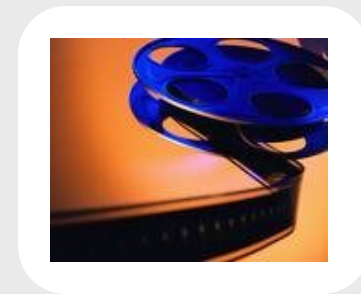
Required reading:

- Bell: Chapter 6



Required video:

- The 11th Hour
- A Rocha: Why should Christians care for creation?



In Part 1

- Religious History



Importance of Ideology

Bell: Themes of religion, individualism and patriarchy show how social inequality and hierarchy influence the way we think about the environment



Importance of Ideology

Ways of thinking determine what we see as:

- Valuable resources
- Proper or improper treatment of people and things
- The proper distribution of wealth and power
- Beautiful nature
- Things worth protecting or not protecting



Sociology and Religion

Max Weber

- Calvinism → protestant ethic and spirit of capitalism
- Historical sociology: The modern world developed in part as a result of religious beliefs and practices



Critique of Judeo-Christian Religion

Lynn White

- 1967: “The historical roots of our ecological crisis”
- Christianity inherited anthropocentric view of nature from Judaism



Lynn White
1907-1987



Genesis 1:26, 28

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have **dominion** over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and **subdue** it: and have **dominion** over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

(Emphasis added)



Lynn White (1967)

- Historical analysis of: Religion, science, economic development, technology
- Western rationality and curiosity led to invention of powerful technology
- When combined with ideology of domination of nature, Western science has caused environmental problems



Critique of Lynn White

Christian ideology
+ Technology
+ Science

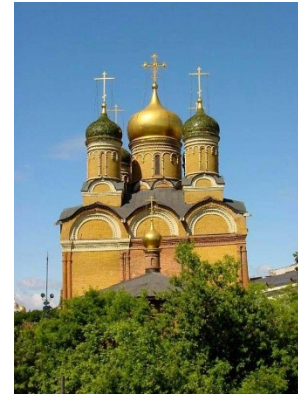
= Ecological problems

Is this interpretation of history of Christianity and Western civilization accurate?



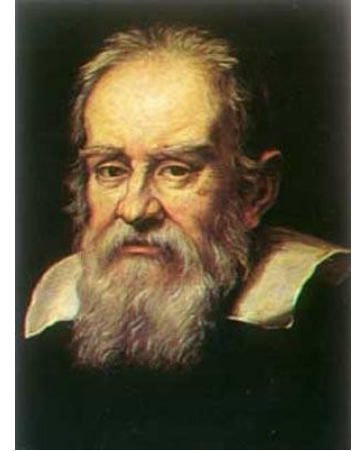
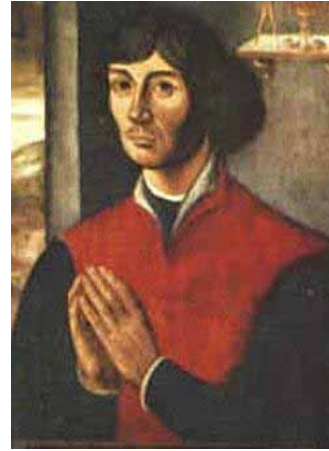
Critique of White

- Is it possible to generalize?



The Church and Science in History

- The Church opposed science as heretical
 - Galileo
 - Copernicus
- The Church supported science as revealing God's nature
 - Isaac Newton
 - Gregor Mendel



Alternatives Within Religion

- Today, some evangelicals in US support stewardship of resources as human responsibility
- Video by “A Rocha” says Christianity can interpret the Bible in a green way, but this view is often ignored



End of Part 1.

Continue to Part 2.



What Would Jesus Drive?
www.WhatWouldJesusDrive.org



Citations Used in This Lecture

Bell, M.M. 2004. *An Invitation to Environmental Sociology*.
2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, California: Pine Forge Press.

White, Lynn. 1967. "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological
Crisis." *Science* 155: 1203-1207.