

## Environment and Society

Soc 462 ☞ Fall 2008 ☞ SH 221

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Recent theoretical explorations have shown that the human and more-than-human world must be understood as a physical and social relationship. Though this may appear obvious, previous interpretations of nature and society separated the two—the former was resource for the latter’s creativity, landscape and wild to the other’s manufactured and sullied or passively degraded by the latter’s agency. The course will explore these earlier and later developments in nature-society theory. Using the concept of ‘political ecology’, first introduced to reinterpret human-environment relations in the Global South, the course explores the political and ethical aspects of socio-environmental issues around the world. To this end, we will think about power in the workings of capitalism, gender relations, and race and consider the norms, institutions, discourses and practices that form foundations for how humans and nonhumans interact. These questions of power matter because they influence what counts as scientific knowledge, who has control over land, trees and water, who becomes the culprit for environmental degradation and who experiences the hazards of hurricanes, industrial food production and toxic waste. The class will cover the concept of scale and the importance of place and space in these analyses. Not a container for society, nature is active in the materialization of places. While the Bell and Kolbert texts are primarily US-oriented, the Zimmerer and Bassett chapters cover the ‘global south’ which, in the last few decades, has been the focus of efforts both to ‘save the planet’ and to encourage particular forms of development. The course ends with a focus on climate change which will, in many parts of the world, exacerbate species loss, drought and starvation, health hazards and flooding and will affect most profoundly those least able to adapt.

### Required texts:

Bell, Michael. 2009. *An Invitation to Environmental Sociology, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition*. Los Angeles, Pine Forge Press.

(this text assigned to provide introductory concepts to fill gaps that may exist in student knowledge of the socio-environment)

Zimmerer, Karl and Thomas Bassett. 2003. *Political ecology*. New York, The Guilford Press.

Kolbert, Elizabeth. 2006. *Field notes from a catastrophe: man, nature and climate change*. New York, Bloomsbury. (provides introductory outline of the science of climate change)

Readings designated for the presenter do not have to be read by everyone, but all students are responsible for the concepts from these texts



Drawing by Maurice Sendak, *Where the Wild Things Are*, 1963, New York, Harper and Row.

## Lecture Topics and Reading Assignments

Changes may be made to this syllabus.

### **Week 1 Introducing the study of nature-society relations**

Aug. 26 and 28

Reading: Bell, Chapter 1, Environmental Problems and Society

Massey, Doreen. 1994. *Space, place and gender*. Minneapolis. University of Minnesota Press.

### **Week 2 Political ecology: key concepts**

Sept. 2, 4

Reading: Zimmerer and Bassett, Chapters 1 and 14 (Intro and conclusion)

### **Week 3 Capitalism and nature**

Sept. 9 Urban and suburban environments

Bell, Chapter 3, Money and Machines

Sept. 11 The politics of consumption

Bell, Chapter 2, Consumption and Materialism

Presenter: Castree, Noel. 2001. Socializing nature: theory, practice and politics in Noel Castree and Bruce Braun (eds.) *Social Nature* Malden, MA: Blackwell.

### **Week 4 Taming nature**

Sept. 16 Cultivating 'terra nullius'

Sept. 18 Monocultures across America: the lawn

Reading: Bell, Chapter 6, The Ideology of Environmental Domination,

Zimmerer and Bassett, Chapter 5 (Swyngedouw, Modernity and the Production of the Spanish Waterscape)

Presenter: Clark, Nigel. 2002. The Demon-Seed Bioinvasion as the Unsettling of Environmental Cosmopolitanism. *Theory, Culture & Society* 19(1-2): 101-125.

### **Week 5 Development and globalization**

Sept. 23, 25

Reading: Bell, Chapter 4, Population and Development

Zimmerer and Bassett, Chapter 12 (Neumann, the production of nature: colonial recasting of the African landscape in Serengeti National Park)

Presenter: Greenough, Paul and Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing (eds.) 2003. *Nature in the global south*. Duke University Press, Durham. 1-28 (Introduction)

Tsing, A. L., 2005. *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection*. Princeton, Princeton University Press. (Introduction)

### **Week 6 Gender, environment and development**

Sept. 30 and Oct. 2

Reading: Carney, Judith. 2004. Gender conflict in Gambian Wetlands. In Dick Peet and Michael Watts. *Liberation Ecologies*. Routledge, NY, pp. 316-335 (pdf)

Presenter:

Schroeder, Rick. 1999. Introduction. *Shady Practices: Agroforestry and Gender Politics in The Gambia*. University of CA Press, Berkeley, pp. 1-20

Nagar, Richa and Saraswati Raju. 2003. Women, NGOs and the Contradictions of Empowerment and Disempowerment: A Conversation. *Antipode* 35(1):1-13.

### **Week 7 Race, power and nature**

Oct. 7, 9 Race, knowledge and environmental imaginaries

Moore, D. S., A. Pandian and J. Kosek (2003). Introduction: the cultural politics of race and nature: terrains of power and practice. in Donald S. Moore, Jake Kosek and Anand Pandian (eds.). *Race, Nature and the Politics of Difference*, Durham, NC, Duke University Press. 1-70. (pdf)

Presenter: Wade, P. (2004) Human nature and race, *Anthropological Theory* 4:157–172.

### **Week 8 The idea of wilderness**

Oct. 14, 16

Reading: Bell, Chapter 8, The Human Nature of Nature

Zimmerer and Bassett, Chapter 11 (Sluyter, Material-conceptual landscape transformation and the emergence of the pristine myth in early colonial Mexico)

Presenter: Raffles, Hugh and Antoinette M.G.A. WinklerPrins. 2003. Further reflections on Amazonian environmental history: Transformations of Rivers and Streams. *Latin American Research Review* (38, No. 3): 165-187.

Clark, Nigel. 2005. Postcolonial Natures. *Antipode*. 37(2):364-368.

Raffles, Hugh. 2005. Towards A Critical Natural History. *Antipode*. 37(2):374-378.

Massey, Doreen. 2005. Negotiating Nonhuman/Human Place. *Antipode*. 37(2):353-357.

### **Week 9 Protection and conservation**

Oct. 21 Reading: Bell, Chapter 7, The Ideology of Environmental Concern

Zimmerer and Bassett, Chapter 6 (Bassett and Zueli, the Ivorian savanna: global narratives and local knowledge of environmental change)

Presenter: Fairhead, James and Melissa Leach, 1996. *Misreading the African Landscape. Society and Ecology in a Forest- Savanna Mosaic*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. (introduction and conclusion)

*October 23, No class, Fall break*

### **Week 10 Protection and conservation**

Oct. 28 and 30

Reading: Zimmerer and Bassett Chapters 2 and 3 (Young, Balancing conservation with development in marine-dependent communities: is ecotourism an empty promise and Sundberg, Strategies for authenticity and space in the Maya Biosphere Reserve, Peten, Guatemala)

Presenter: Rangan, Haripriya. 2004. From Chipko to Uttaranchal: the environment of protest and development in the Indian Himalaya in Dick Peet and Michael Watts. *Liberation Ecologies*. Routledge, NY, pp. 371-393.

Tsing, A. L., 2005. *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection*. Princeton, Princeton University Press. (Forest of Collaborations)

## **Week 11 Environmental knowledge and planning**

Nov. 4 and 6

Reading: Zimmerer and Bassett Chapters 9 and 13 (Robbins, Fixed categories in a portable landscape: the causes and consequences of land cover categorization and Carney, Agroenvironments and slave strategies in the diffusion of rice culture to the Americas)

Presenter: Moran, Sharon. 2008. Under the Lawn: Engaging the Water Cycle, *Ethics, Place & Environment*, 11(2):129-145.

Lake, Robert W. 2003. Dilemmas of Environmental Planning in Post-Urban New Jersey *Social Science Quarterly* 84(4): 1002-1017.

## **Week 12 Risk**

Nov. 11, No class, Veteran's Day

Nov. 13

Reading: Bell, Chapter 9, The Rationality of Risk

Foucault, Michel. 1997. 'Society must be Defended' Lectures at the Collège de France 1975-76.

Edited by Mauro Bertani and Alessandro Fontana, Trans David Macey, Editions de Seuil/Gallimard Edition. New York, Picador. (Ch. 11)

First 7 pages of Braun (below)

Presenter: Braun, Bruce. 2007. Biopolitics and the molecularization of life. *Cultural Geographies* 14(6):6-28.

Brooks, Sally. 2005. Biotechnology and the Politics of Truth: From the Green Revolution to an Evergreen Revolution *Sociologia Ruralis* 45(4): 360-379.

## **Week 13 Environmental justice**

Nov. 18, 20

Reading: Bell, Chapter 5, Body and Health

Pulido, L. (2000). Rethinking environmental racism: white privilege and urban development in Southern California. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 90(1): 12-40.

Presenter: Braun, Bruce and James McCarthy 2005. Katrina and abandoned being, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 23:802-809

Shostak, Sara. 2004. Environmental justice and genomics: acting on the futures of environmental health. *Science as Culture*. 13(4):540-562.

## **Week 14 Human-environment futures**

Nov. 25

Reading: Bell, Chapter 10, Mobilizing the Ecological Society

Kolbert, pp. 1-44

Presenter: Tsing, Anna. forthcoming. Unruly Edges: Mushrooms as Companion Species. in Sharon Ghamari-Tabrizi, ed. *Thinking with Donna Haraway*. Cambridge, MIT Press.

Haraway, Donna. 2005. *Companion species manifesto*. Chicago, Prickly Paradigm Press.

Haraway, Donna. 2007. *When species meet*. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press. (chapter 1)

November 27, No class, Thanksgiving

## **Week 15 Global climate change**

Dec. 2, 4

Reading: Bell, Chapter 11, Governing the Ecological Society

Kolbert, pp. 45-90

Presenter: Lahsen, Myanna. 2005. Technocracy, Democracy and U.S. Climate Politics: the need for demarcations *Science, Technology, & Human Values* 30(1):137-169

Baldwin, Andrew. (forthcoming). Carbon nullius and racial rule: race, nature and the cultural politics of forest carbon in Canada. *Antipode*.

### **Week 16 Last week**

Dec. 9 and 11

Reading: Kolbert, pp. 91-200



### **Course requirements**

In this course you will be expected to do the following:

- Buy the texts, print the pdfs, print your summary for your own notes and bring all of these to class
- Attend class and be on time.
- Read your email. At various points in the course I will send you materials or instructions by email. During the semester you should check your email daily. Email is also a good way to get relatively quick answers to your questions.
- Read all assigned pages in the texts (approximately 40 pages which should be read for the first class of each week). Class discussions will be based on assigned readings.
- Participate in class discussions. The success of this course depends on your participation. You must always come to class prepared to discuss assigned readings.
- Complete one oral presentation of the readings for a week (see below).
- Complete and submit all summaries each week, on time. Assignments must be submitted by due dates. Late assignments will not be accepted, except in cases of documented medical emergencies.
- You are responsible for knowing what counts as plagiarism. Plagiarized material will result in a grade of 0 for the assignment and possibly additional consequences.
- Take one final essay exam (cumulative).



### **Grading and assignments**

Final exam (cumulative, take home): 20%

Summaries of 8 reading assignments: 40% (5 points each)

Presentation of assigned readings: 20%

Participation: 20%

#### Grading:

95-100 A	76-79 C+	63-65 D
90-94 A-	73-75 C	60-62 D-
86-89 B+	70-72 C-	0-59 F
83-85 B	66-69 D+	
80-82 B-		

A: achievement is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements.

B: achievement is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements.

C: achievement meets the course requirements in every respect.

D: achievement is worthy of credit even though it fails to meet fully the course requirements.

F: achievement is inadequate and no credit will be given for the course.

I: (Incomplete) Assigned due to extraordinary circumstances, e.g., hospitalization, which prevent the completion of work on time. Requires a written contract.

Graduate students will be expected to perform at a level higher than undergraduates in reading comprehension, writing ability, class participation and in the presentation.

## **ΣCR**

### **Summaries (40%)**

Choose 8 weekly reading assignments (readings that are assigned to everyone—you are not responsible for readings assigned to the presenter) that you want to summarize (not including the reading you will present orally). Please turn in your summary on the first day of class of each week. It can be single spaced and printed on both sides. Emailing it to me is fine too but be sure it is in MS word. These will be graded on: writing ability, comprehension and connections made among concepts and among readings. Summaries should be about 2 pages, single spaced. The summary should include some or all of the following:

- Title: list the chapters you are summarizing.
- Main points: What is the author talking about? What are the questions she/he raises? What is the argument? What does she/he conclude?
- Key concepts: What concepts does the author introduce and why are they important?
- Connections: Here you will make connections between this reading and another we've read. You will see some themes reappearing. What does this author say that is similar, different from or adds to other authors' work? Show me that you recognize these links. If you can make connections to something environmental in the news, fine.
- Given what has been discussed in class and what you've read already, what do you think of these ideas?

### **Oral presentation: 20%**

Please choose one week's reading and prepare a short presentation. You may refer to notes but please don't read. Sometimes it is helpful to map or diagram readings. Present ideas thematically rather than presenting the points of each author. Be sure to connect these readings to those the entire class has done for that week. I'd like you to tell us: what are the big ideas of these readings, what are the interesting points, where are the links between the readings and what did these ideas bring to mind for you? Be sure to send me your presentation ideas beforehand and arrange to meet with me to discuss them.

### **Learning disability**

Please inform me if you have a learning disability. Please provide documentation and discuss your needs with me well before an exam or before we get far into the lectures.