

CUNY Graduate Center
Department of Sociology
Department of Earth and
Environmental Sciences

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Spring 2016
Thursdays, 11:45AM-1:45PM
Room # **TBA**

**SOC 84510/EES 79903/MALS 72700:
ENVIRONMENTAL SOCIOLOGY/ ENVIRONMENTAL POLITICAL-ECONOMY/
POLITICAL ECOLOGY OF SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE**

This course explores the complex, dynamic interactions between social systems and ecosystems. Environmental political economy challenges social science's human exemptionalist paradigm by incorporating the natural environment as a variable. The course will examine the social origins of the major environmental stresses facing contemporary social systems, the social conflicts that these stresses have produced, and a range of approaches to resolving social system-ecosystem disjuncture at local, regional, national, and transnational levels. Major theoretical frameworks and debates in environmental political economy will be addressed. Special attention will be paid to the roles of science and technology in generating and responding to socio-environmental disorganization, the role of socio-economic inequality in environmental conflicts, the emergence of environmental social movement coalitions, the fusion of the politics of place, production, and identity in ecological resistance movements, and linkages between transnational economic processes and efforts to achieve ecologically and socially sustainable development trajectories.

Books:

- Agyeman, Julian. 2013. *Introducing Just Sustainabilities: Policy, Planning, and Practice. Justice.* (ISBN #: 978-1-78032-409-8).
- Beder, Sharon. 1997. *Global Spin: The Corporate Assault on Environmentalism.* (ISBN #: 1-890132-12-8).
- Daly, Herman E. 1997. *Beyond Growth: The Economics of Sustainable Development.* (ISBN #: 0-8070-4708-2).
- Dowie, Mark. 1995. *Losing Ground: American Environmentalism at the Close of the Twentieth Century.* (ISBN #: 0-262-54084-3).

Dunlap, Riley E. & Robert J. Brulle. 2015. *Climate Change and Society: Sociological Perspectives*. (ISBN #: 978-0-19-935611-9).

Gould, Kenneth A., and Tammy L. Lewis (Eds.). 2014. *Twenty Lessons in Environmental Sociology*. (ISBN # 978-0199325924).

Gould, Kenneth A., David N. Pellow, and Allan Schnaiberg. 2008. *The Treadmill of Production: Injustice and Unsustainability in the Global Economy*. (ISBN #: 978-1-59451-507-1).

Lewis, Tammy. 2016. *Ecuador's Environmental Revolutions: Ecoimperialists, Ecodependents, and Ecoresisters*. (ISBN #: 978-0-26252-877-1).

McMichael, Philip. 2012. *Development and Social Change: A Global Perspective*. (ISBN #: 978-1-4129-9207-7).

Obach, Brian. 2004. *Labor and the Environmental Movement: The Quest for Common Ground*. (ISBN #: 0-262-65066-5).

Park, Lisa Sun-Hee, and David Naguib Pellow. 2013. *The Slums of Aspen: Immigrants vs. The Environment in America's Eden*. (ISBN #: 978-1479834761)

Schnaiberg, Allan. 1980. *The Environment: From Surplus to Scarcity*. (DOWNLOAD FROM BLACKBOARD SITE).

Evaluations:

Evaluations will be based on your participation in our discussions (10%), service as discussion leader (10%), and a substantial research paper (80%).

Participation: This is a seminar course built upon our discussions. This requires that you make a commitment to the class to be present and prepared. Being prepared requires that you complete all of the week's readings prior to our class meetings. I have designed the course structure, but where it takes us, what questions we raise and what answers we consider is largely up to you.

Discussion leaders: Each week you will take turns serving as discussion leaders. Discussion leaders will be responsible for initiating discussion of the readings for the week. You should be prepared to review briefly the main points of the readings, ask questions about those points, and provide your own reactions to what you read.

Research Paper: The paper assignment can be found at the end of this syllabus. The goal is to produce a paper of publishable quality. Papers will be evaluated in terms of the rigor and depth of your analyses. Of primary concern is your ability to synthesize and integrate theoretical frameworks from the course readings, ideas from class discussions, and your own research data.

COURSE SCHEDULE

- Week 1)** **Thur. 2/4. Introduction & Nature**
- Week 2)** **Thur. 2/11. Basics of Socio-environmental dynamics**
Readings: Gould & Lewis
- Week 3)** **Tues. 2/18. FILM: *A Fierce Green Fire***
- Week 4)** **Thur. 2/25. Production**
Readings: Schnaiberg
- Week 5)** **Thur. 3/3. Development**
Readings: McMichael
Assignment: Topic choice due.
- Week 6)** **Thur. 3/10. Growth**
Readings: Daly
- Week 7)** **Thur. 3/17. Inequality**
Readings: Park & Pellow
- Week 8)** **Thur. 3/24. Information**
Readings: Beder
Assignment: Literature review bibliography due.

- Week 9)** **Thur. 3/31. Climate Change**
Readings: Dunlap & Brulle
- Week 10)** **Thur. 4/7. Social Movements: North**
Readings: Dowie
Assignment: Outline of research paper due.
- Week 11)** **Thur. 4/14. Social Movements: South**
Readings: Lewis
- Week 12)** **Thur. 4/21. Labor**
Readings: Obach
- Week 13)** **Thur. 4/28. No Class Meeting (Spring Recess)**
- Week 14)** **Thur. 5/5. Sustainability**
Readings: Agyeman
- Week 15)** **Thur. 5/12. Transitions**
Readings: Gould, Pellow, and Schnaiberg
- Week 16)** **Thur. 5/19. Assignment:** Final research paper due

Research Paper Assignment

Your primary assignment for this course is the development of a theoretically framed, empirically grounded original socio-environmental research paper of publishable quality (25-30 pages). Your research may focus on any socio-environmental problem or issue of your choice. Research papers will be evaluated in terms of your integration of social theory and substantive data.

Your research assignment will be broken down as follows:

- A. Topic Choice and Research Question. (1-2 pages. Due in class on 3/3).

What do you want to investigate? Why is that subject interesting to you? Who else might be interested in your research? Why? What contribution do you hope to make to our understanding of socio-environmental dynamics?

- B. Literature Review Bibliography. (20 source min. Due in class on 3/24).

Identify the relevant substantive sociological literature on your topic. Be sure that these substantive and theoretical sources are readily available to you.

- C. Outline of Research Paper. (3-5 pages. Due in class on 4/7).

Provide a detailed outline of the paper that you intend to write based on your research. Begin with a clear thesis statement. Include an introductory section providing a theoretical framework for your substantive data, a brief methods sections, a plan for organizing the presentation of that substantive data, and a concluding section connecting your data to the theoretical framework you have developed. Clearly identify how your research will contribute to our understanding of your topic.

- D. Final Research Paper. (25-30 pages. Due on Thursday, 5/19).

Be sure to clarify the theoretical framing of your work and the contribution it makes to the area of socio-environmental inquiry. Maintain a "dialogue" between theory and evidence. Your format should approximate that of a published journal article.

Turn in each assignment in a portfolio that includes copies of your previous assignments. **Late work will not be accepted.**