

## **Community & Environmental Sociology/Sociology 140**

Introduction to Community & Environmental Sociology  
Spring Semester 2010  
Lectures: MW 4:35-5:25, 184 Russell Lab

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### **COURSE OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES**

This course is an introduction to community and environmental sociology. Throughout this semester, we will explore the ways in which various understandings of 'community' and 'environment' shape social life and the world we live in. We will also work to understand how those ideas came to be, why they are not universally agreed upon throughout society, and how the predominance of any given idea changes over time. We use this overarching framework as the basis for studying some of today's most pressing social and environmental conflicts, focusing mostly on the contemporary United States. Ultimately, my goal in this course is to help students develop their critical thinking skills and to be more compassionate and engaged citizens.

This course is guided by the perspective that social and environmental conflicts are embedded in extraordinary material inequalities and various forms of cultural oppression. The problems we will confront throughout this course are complex and daunting, defying simple, 'silver bullet' solutions. Students should be prepared to grapple with, consider, and deliberate multiple and often conflicting perspectives about the causes of serious socio-environmental problems, as well as equally varied (and inconclusive) debates about how these problems should be solved. My goal is not to present a series of objective 'facts' for students to memorize but, instead, to help students understand why so much conflict and disagreement exist. The late Fred Buttel emphasized the importance of debate in his syllabi for earlier versions of this course: "One of the most important points that will be made in this course is that virtually every rural-social and international-development issue can be explored from more than one perspective, and that while each of these alternative points of view has shortcomings, each can generate useful insights."

The first two full weeks of class will be devoted to acquainting students with the primary ways in which sociologists have conceptualized 'community' and 'environment'. From that point, we will use those theoretical frames to critically interrogate a series of major contemporary socio-environmental issues, including public university research and outreach practices, demographic change and migration, economic development, agrifood systems (including the agricultural industry, activism, research, and popular culture), and environmental justice and anti-toxics activism.

## REQUIRED READINGS

The following book is required for all students. As part of UW-Madison's "Go Big Read" program, each student will receive a copy of this book at no cost:

Pollan, Michael. 2008. *In Defense of Food: An Eater's Manifesto*. New York: Penguin Books.

All other readings, some lecture materials, and other key information will be available as downloadable material or direct links to websites through Learn@UW. To utilize the direct weblinks on Learn@UW, you will need to set your computer to allow pop-up windows.

<https://learnuw.wisc.edu/>

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. **Preparation/Attendance/Participation.** Preparation, attendance, and participation are absolutely mandatory in this course.
  - a. *Preparation:* I expect each student to come to class with the reading done before lecture of the day for which it is listed on the syllabus. Doing readings well means reading, taking notes, and re-reading. Please bring the reading materials and your notes with you to lecture and section, and be prepared to ask questions or make comments that occurred to you while doing the readings. I expect you to actively engage with the readings in class, so preparation is essential.
  - b. *Attendance in section:* Each student will be allowed two absences from section without the need for official notes and without affecting the participation grade. Each day in class, it is your responsibility to sign the attendance sheet; if you have not signed it during class, please ask your teaching assistant for it *before* class is dismissed. Beyond two absences, an official notification has to be produced. We recommend that you anticipate that you may need to be absent at some point in the semester; thus, do not squander your absences early in the semester unless necessary. In regards to religious observances and other anticipated absences: Please let your teaching assistant know at the beginning of the semester about any dates you will be absent from class for religious or other reasons. When you are absent, you are responsible for taking the initiative to find out what you missed. You should obtain notes from a fellow classmate and also inquire with us about updates, news, and clarifications. We will not rehash lecture or discussion material for you if you miss class.
  - c. *Participation:* You are required to actively engage with the course material in class. You need not always have something to say, but your consistent and informed participation in lecture and/or section is a course requirement.
2. **Reading Reflections.** You are required to write reading reflections on a regular basis for this class. You will receive 0, 10, or 20 points for each reading reflection, and the maximum number of points for this component of your grade is 200. The number of points you receive depends on the quality of your work, the degree to which you adhere to the following requirements, and how much your work demonstrates that you have meaningfully engaged with the assigned reading. You will not be judged on how well you adhere to what you think our points of view are. Reading reflections must be proofread, typed in 12-point font, and the equivalent of one double-spaced page (minimum). These should be submitted to the appropriate "dropbox" on Learn@UW. These are due by 2:00pm

on Mondays (unless otherwise noted). We will NOT accept any late reading reflections. In each reading reflection, you must do the following:

- a. First, in one or two sentences of your own words, summarize the main argument of the *reading listed below for that week*.
- b. Then, in one or two additional sentences, state the primary evidence that the author(s) provide to support the main argument.
- c. Then, discuss that reading in relation to one or more of the following: recent course concepts, other readings, your critical evaluation of the evidence provided to back up the arguments, your own questions about the reading(s), how the readings affected you personally, and/or comments or suggested discussion questions for class. Please reference specific passages or ideas in order to illustrate your comments.

The reading you should address each week is listed below:

- 1/25: Almgren
- 2/1: Cronon
- 2/8: York
- 2/17: Harrison et al (\*\*note: due on Wednesday this week)
- 2/22: Hellman
- 3/1: Knox & Marston
- 3/8: Stoecker
- 3/17: Gliessman (\*\*note: due on Wednesday this week)
- 3/22: Gilbert
- 4/5: Kloppenburg (either one – your choice)
- 4/12: Pollan (entire book)
- 4/19: Brown
- 4/26: Moses

3. **Exams (200 points each).** Two in-class exams will be given. The first exam will take place during the normal class time on March 15 and will cover material from the first half of the course. The second exam will take place on May 5 during the normal class time and will cover material from the second half of the course. Exams will be a combination of short-answer and essay.

We expect that you will be able to take both of the exams on the dates indicated, since both will take place during the regularly scheduled class period. However, if you will be unable to take a regularly scheduled exam, you must inform us before 2:00pm of the day of the exam. Makeup exams will always be held within one week *after* the regularly scheduled exam, will be held at our discretion, and will consist of a single essay question.

4. **Paper: Critique of Michael Pollan's *In Defense of Food*. Due by 12:00 noon on April 28 (250 points).** Your task in this assignment is to critically evaluate Pollan's *In Defense of Food* in relation to (a) what we have studied in class this semester and (b) the following additional readings:

DuPuis, E. Melanie. 2007. "Angels and Vegetables: A Brief History of Food Advice in America." *Gastronomica* 7: 34-44.

Guthman, Julie. 2007a. "Commentary on teaching food: Why I am fed up with Michael Pollan et al." *Agriculture and Human Values* 24: 261-264.

Julie Guthman. 2007b. "Can't stomach it: How Michael Pollan et al made me want to eat Cheetos." *Gastronomica* 7: 75-79.

Andrew Szasz. 2007. "Introduction: Inverted Quarantine." In *Shopping Our Way to Safety: How We Changed from Protecting the Environment to Protecting Ourselves*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

In your paper, explicitly state what you see as the book's three major strengths and its three major weaknesses. Each of the strengths and weaknesses you identify must be compelling (rather than arbitrary or trite) and logical. In your paper, you must also *meaningfully* and *explicitly* engage with each of the additional readings listed above (DuPuis 2007, Guthman 2007a, Guthman 2007b, Szasz 2007) and at least three of the required readings listed in the syllabus. Your paper must demonstrate that you have seriously considered the additional readings (DuPuis 2007, Guthman 2007a, Guthman 2007b, Szasz 2007); therefore, if you do not use them to support your arguments about the Pollan book's three major strengths and weaknesses, you will need to explain/justify that decision.

Your paper should be thoughtfully composed, coherently organized, formatted in 12-point font, and 5-6 double-spaced pages. Submit your paper to the appropriate dropbox on Learn@UW. Be sure to properly cite your sources within the text. A references list at the end of your paper is not necessary unless you are citing a source not included in the syllabus.

Please submit your work on time. Although we will accept late submissions, we will subtract 10% per day late (or each fraction of a day). The deductions max out at a 50% loss.

## **PLAGIARISM**

All work that you submit for this class must be your own work, and you are required to quote and cite all references properly. Although this mandate appears straightforward, we are well aware of how murky the task can be. Wherever you are unsure about quoting and citing, please come see either of us to figure out the best strategy. UW-Madison's College of Agriculture suggests that we present to you the following statement on plagiarism:

Plagiarism is a serious offense. All sources and assistance used in preparing your papers must be precisely and explicitly acknowledged. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please read the following information...

<http://www.wisc.edu/students/saja/misconduct/UWS14.html#points>

...or come talk with me. Ignorance of what constitutes plagiarism is not a defense. It is your responsibility to be sure. The web creates special risks. Cutting and pasting even a few words from a web page or paraphrasing material without a reference constitutes plagiarism. If you are not sure how to refer to something you find on the internet, you can always give the URL. It is generally better to quote than to paraphrase from material on the web, because in the absence of page numbers it can be hard to find passages that are paraphrased rather than quoted. For more information on writing and source citation, the following may be helpful:

[www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/Acknowledging\\_Sources.pdf](http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/Acknowledging_Sources.pdf).

## GRADES

Grades will be based on the following distribution, out of a total of 1000 points:

|            |  |
|------------|--|
| 150 points | Attendance/Preparation/Participation   |
| 200 points | Reading Reflections (weekly)   |
| 200 points | Exam #1 (March 15, in class)   |
| 200 points | Exam #2 (May 5, in class)  |
| 250 points | Paper: Critique of <i>In Defense of Food</i> (due by 12:00 noon on April 28) |

## SUGGESTIONS

Doing well in this course will require active engagement and diligent study habits. We have several suggestions about practices that will help you stay afloat and engaged with the course:

1. Keep up with the readings, and do the assigned readings before the date on which they are due.
2. Take notes while you read. Afterwards, write a few sentences about the main point(s) of the piece. Jot down any questions you have about the readings or course material, and bring these to class.
3. Make your reading reflections a productive (rather than tedious) exercise. Carefully summarize key arguments, note common themes between readings, relate readings to lecture material, etc.
4. Attend class. In lecture and in section, be prepared to ask questions or offer comments about the readings, how they relate to lecture material, or current events.
5. Take notes throughout class. Do not expect that simply copying down the terms and diagrams that we present on the board or screen to be sufficient.
6. When/if you miss class, get class notes from another student who you trust to be a good note-taker. This is your responsibility – we will not repeat lectures for students who miss class.
7. Check your email frequently for messages about the class.
8. Attend office hours. Your professor and teaching assistant are both glad to meet with you outside of class. If you cannot attend the scheduled office hours, let us know and we will find another time to meet with you.

## NIGHTTIME SAFETY

The University of Wisconsin-Madison has established several transportation and walking escort services to help you stay safe while getting around campus and the nearby areas after dark. To help take responsibility for your own safety and that of your friends, make use of services such as UW-Madison SAFEwalk and SAFERide programs:

<http://www2.fpm.wisc.edu/trans/Safeservices.asp>

## SCHEDULE OF TOPICS, REQUIRED READINGS, AND EXAMS

### January 20: Introduction to the Course

### January 25 and 27: Thinking Sociologically about 'Community'

Gunnar Almgren. 2000. "Community." In Edgar F. Borgatta and Rhonda J.V. Montgomery, eds., *Encyclopedia of Sociology*. Second Edition. New York: Macmillan, pp. 362-369.

Ferdinand Tonnies. Selections from *Community and Society* (1887) and *Custom: An Essay on Social Codes* (1909).

Wendell Berry. 1995. "Conserving communities." From *Another Turn of the Crank*. Washington, D.C.: Counterpoint, pp. 8-24. Available here: <http://home.btconnect.com/tipiglen/communtty.html>

Peggy McIntosh. 1988. "White privilege: Unpacking the invisible knapsack." Wellesley College Center for Research on Women.

### February 1 and 3: Thinking Sociologically about 'Environment'

Muir, John. 1998 (1901). "Selections from *Our National Parks*," in J. Baird Callicott and Michael P. Nelson, eds., *The Great New Wilderness Debate*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press.

Cronon, William. 1998. "The trouble with wilderness, or, getting back to the wrong nature," in J. Baird Callicott and Michael P. Nelson, eds., *The Great New Wilderness Debate*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press.

Guha, Ramachandra. 1997. "The authoritarian biologist and the arrogance of anti-humanism: Wildlife conservation in the third world." *The Ecologist* 27: 14-20.

Cole, Luke, and Sheila Foster. 2001. "A history of the environmental justice movement," in *From the Ground Up: Environmental Racism and the Rise of the Environmental Justice Movement*. New York: NYU Press.

### February 8: Community and Environment in the University

Richard York. 2009. "The science of nature and the nature of science." In *Twenty Lessons in Environmental Sociology*, Kenneth A. Gould and Tammy L. Lewis, eds. New York: Oxford University Press, 85-94.

Press, Eyal, and Jennifer Washburn. 2000. "The kept university." *The Atlantic Monthly*. Available in four parts at: <http://www.theatlantic.com/issues/2000/03/press.htm>

**February 10: Community and Environment in the News**

Elizabeth H. Campbell. 2009. "Corporate power: The role of the global media in shaping what we know about the environment." In *Twenty Lessons in Environmental Sociology*, Kenneth A. Gould and Tammy L. Lewis, eds. New York: Oxford University Press, 68-84.

**February 15, 17, 22, and 24: Demographic Change and Migration**

February 15: *Reading to be assigned*

*Note: Guest speaker: Professor Katherine Curtis*

February 17: Harrison, Jill, Sarah Lloyd, and Trish O'Kane. 2009. "Changing hands: Hired labor on Wisconsin dairy farms." Read Briefings 1 and 4. Available at <http://www.pats.wisc.edu/projects/2>

Kotlowitz, Alex. 2007. "Our town." *New York Times Magazine*. August 5.

Moser, Bob. 2006. "White heat." *The Nation*. August 28/Sept 4.

Eviatar, Daphne. 2006. "Nightly nativism." *The Nation*. August 28/Sept 4.

February 22: Harrison, Jill, Sarah Lloyd, and Trish O'Kane. 2009. "Changing hands: Hired labor on Wisconsin dairy farms." Read Briefing 2. Available at <http://www.pats.wisc.edu/projects/2>

Selections from *World of Mexican Migrants: The Rock and the Hard Place* by Judith Hellman. 2008. New York: The New Press.

February 24: Daniel Rothenberg. 2000. "Back home: Mexican ranchos." In *With These Hands: The Hidden World of Migrant Farmworkers Today*. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 298-322.

**March 1, 3, 8, and 10: Development**

March 1: Paul L. Knox and Sallie A. Marston. 2007. "The geography of economic development." In *Human Geography: Places and Regions in Global Context*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, pp. 251-298.

March 3: Gary Green. 2010 (forthcoming). "Green-collar jobs." In *The Business of Sustainability*. Berkshire Press.

*Note: Guest speaker: Professor Gary Green*

March 8: Randy Stoecker. 2009. "Are we talking the walk of community-based research?" *Action Research* 7(4): 385-404.

*Note: Guest speaker: Professor Randy Stoecker*

March 10: Jane Collins. 2000. Tracing social relations in commodity chains: The case of grapes in Brazil. In *Commodities and Globalization: Anthropological Perspectives*, Angelique Haugerud, M. Priscilla Stone, and Peter D. Little, eds. New York: Rowman & Littlefield.

Jane Collins. 2006. Redefining the boundaries of work: Apparel workers and community unionism in the global economy. *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power* 13: 9-31.

*Note: Guest speaker: Professor Jane Collins*

**March 15: \*\*Exam #1\*\* (in class)**

**March 17, 22, and 24, and April 5, 7, 12, and 14: Agrifood Systems**

March 17: Gliessman, Stephen. R. 2007. "The need for sustainable food production systems." From *Agroecology: The Ecology of Sustainable Food Systems*, 2nd ed. Boca Raton: CRC Press, pp. 3-17.

March 22: Jess Gilbert. 2009. "Democratizing states and the use of history." *Rural Sociology* 74(1): 3-24.

*Note: Guest speaker: Professor Jess Gilbert*

March 24: *Reading to be assigned*

*Note: Guest speaker: Professor Michael Bell*

(Week of March 29<sup>th</sup>: Spring recess)

April 5: Kloppenburg, Jack, Jr., John Hendrickson, and George W. Stevenson. 1996. "Coming in to the foodshed." *Agriculture and Human Values* 13(3): 33-42.

Jack Kloppenburg, Jr. 2000. "Biopiracy, witchery, and the fables of ecoliberalism." *Peace Review* 12(4): 509-516.

*Note: Guest speaker: Professor Jack Kloppenburg*

April 7: Chávez, César. 1993. "Farm workers at risk." In *Toxic Struggles: The Theory and Practice of Environmental Justice*, pp. 163-70, edited by R. Hofrichter. Philadelphia: New Society Publishers.

Majka, Linda C., and Theo J. Majka. 2000. "Organizing U.S. farm workers: A continuous struggle" from *Hungry for Profit: The Agribusiness Threat to Farmers, Food, and the Environment*, edited by Fred Magdoff, John Bellamy Foster, and Frederick H. Buttel.

April 12, 14: Michael Pollan. 2008. *In Defense of Food: An Eater's Manifesto*. New York: Penguin Books. (entire book)

**April 19, 21, 26, and 28: Environmental Justice and Anti-Toxics Activism**

April 19: Brown, Phil. 2000. "Popular epidemiology and toxic waste contamination: Lay and professional ways of knowing," in Steve Kroll-Smith, Phil Brown, and Valerie J. Gunter, eds., *Illness and the Environment: A Reader in Contested Medicine*. New York: New York University Press.

April 21: Laura Senier, Brian Mayer, Phil Brown, and Rachel Morello-Frosch. 2007. "School custodians and green cleaners: New approaches to labor-environment coalitions." *Organization & Environment* 20(3): 304-324.

*Note: Guest speaker: Professor Laura Senier*

April 26, 28: Moses, Marion. 1993. "Farm workers and pesticides," in Robert D. Bullard, ed., *Confronting Environmental Racism: Voices from the Grassroots*. Boston: South End Press.

Clarren, Rebecca. 2008. "Pesticide drift: Immigrants in California's Central Valley are sick of breathing poisoned air." *Orion Magazine* July/August: 56-63.

Note: Critique of *In Defense of Food* due at 12:00 noon on April 28

**May 3: Wrap-up: Where to go from here?**

**May 5: \*\*Exam #2\*\* (in class)**