

Instructor: Michael M. Bell
340C Agricultural Hall
michaelbell@wisc.edu

Fall, 2006
University of Wisconsin-Madison
Th 1:20-3:15, F 4-5:00, 38 Ag. Hall

Sociology/Rural Sociology 541
SOCIAL BEHAVIOR AND NATURAL RESOURCES

“The real issues in sustainability aren’t technical,” an agronomist said to me a few years ago, “they’re social.” An over-statement perhaps—sustainability certainly also involves many real, and often difficult, technical issues. But this agronomist’s words are indicative of how researchers from across the disciplines are increasingly coming to value the importance of a sociological perspective in the study of the environment. This course presents a graduate-level introduction into that important perspective.

The organization of the course, rather immodestly, roughly follows the organization of a book of mine, *An Invitation to Environmental Sociology*, which we will also read in the second and third weeks of the semester. I hesitate to assign my own book, fearing it might discourage debate. But it does provide a general overview and synthesis of the field. Besides, you might as well know what I think about the various topics we will cover, and I don’t want to lecture.

The course is intended to be an occasion to read, to write, and to discuss—not a sit-back-and-take-notes-for-the-exam class. So please accept my invitation to engage in critical, cooperative interchange with each other (including me!). That’s what a course should be all about. Call it the “three r’s” of scholarship: reading, ‘riting, and responding.

To further that responding, we’ll have two kinds of sessions—*seminar sessions* and more informal *conversation labs*, one of each per week. The seminar sessions, running about 2 hours, are when we’ll discuss the bulk of the week’s readings. The conversation labs, running about an hour, will generally be focused on a single, short, provocative reading.

As for the ‘riting part, the main work of the seminar will be the preparation of 3 *critiques* (roughly 1000-1500 words) of the readings and one medium-length *policy review* or *social science essay* (roughly 2500-3000 words), with an eye toward creating something publishable.

Books

Beck, Ulrich and Johannes Willms. 2003. *Conversations with Ulrich Beck*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press. 0745628249

Bell, Michael M., with Michael S. Carolan. 2004 (1998). *An Invitation to Environmental Sociology*. Second edition. Newbury Park, CA: Pine Forge Press (Sage). 0761987754

Brown, Lester R. 2006. *Plan B 2.0: Rescuing a Planet Under Stress and a Civilization in Trouble*. New York: Norton. 0393328317

Diamond, Jared. 2005. *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*. New York and London: Penguin. 0143036556

Klinenberg, Eric. 2002. *Heat Wave: A Social Autopsy of Disaster in Chicago*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Korten, David. 2006. *The Great Turning: From Empire to Earth Community*. Berrett-Koehler. 1887208070

Schor, Juliet. 2005. *Born to Buy: The Commercialized Child and the New Consumer Culture*. New York: Scribner. 0684870568

A Note on Student Evaluation

Your grade for this course will be based on the following: the three critiques (33%), the final paper (33%), and class participation (33%).

A Note on the Critiques

The point of the critiques is to give you a chance to develop your own views on the readings, to communicate those views to the class, and to demonstrate your command of what we've read thus far. The format is simple: Write a critical appraisal of some particular theme in the readings—and email the result to the class. The critiques will be discussed in class in small groups. The best critiques will be those that a), aptly capture the selected theme; and b) develop a coherent and distinctive argument about that theme. Give your critique a title and a reference section. Also, note that each critique should emphasize the course material of the preceding third of the course. You may rewrite your critiques as often as you like, should you be unsatisfied with your grade. The critiques are due, in turn, on September 29th, October 27th, and December 1st.

A Note on the Final Paper

The central written work of the course will be the preparation—and possible submission—of a 2500-3000 word (about 10 to 12 double-spaced pages) policy review or social science essay for the journal *Society and Natural Resources*. This is both easier and harder than it sounds. On the easy side is that you do not have to spend months interviewing and running regression analyses to write a publishable policy review or essay. The hard side of all this, though, is that such pieces generally require a far higher level of writing and theoretical reasoning than a piece that mainly reports research findings. Thus, the best papers will be those that exhibit good writing and that develop your own lines of reasoning, and not merely report on those of others. As to topic, I will welcome anything that would be of interest to environmental sociology and that fits with the description of policy reviews and essays that *Society and Natural Resources* invites, which is as follows:

“Policy Reviews and Essays: Policy Reviews examine current or proposed policies associated with natural resource management. These articles can raise questions of policy, propose alternative action, or critique current or proposed policy. An essay is a creative article discussing social science issues related to natural resources or the environment. Total length of these manuscripts should not exceed 12 double spaced, typed pages.”

Please note that the “first musings” on your policy review or essay is due October 13th, and a second musings with preliminary bibliography is due November 10th. We will be discussing everyone's first draft in class during the final two weeks of the course. Your completed first

draft is due via email to the entire class 48 hours before the session in which it is to be discussed. The final draft is due December 20th by 5pm.

A Note on Discussion Format

The bulk of each class session will be devoted to an open discussion of the day's reading. Each discussion will be conducted as a kind of thematic "pot luck" in which each seminar participant is expected to bring to the class a few thoughts on the significance of the readings, plus a discussion question or two. We'll begin the discussion on the day's readings by "setting the table" of our pot luck, going around the room and gathering everyone's thoughts and discussion questions in turn. Some classes, however, the readings may be a bit baffling, requiring some translation of the day's menu, as it were. If necessary, we will take some time for that, before setting the table with everyone's pot-luck items.

The daily pattern will thus normally be as follows:

- translating the menu, if necessary
- "setting the table"
- the "feast"—open discussion
- preview of readings for next time

A Note on Class Participation

Your grade for class participation will not be a measure of how loud you were, or of how often you spoke. Rather, it will reflect the extent to which you were "there." I will evaluate your "thereness" based equally on 1) your engagement (including the quality of your listening) in class discussions; 2) attendance; 3) your participation in "table setting"; 4) your engagement with the written work of other seminar members during in-class small-group discussions of critiques and during the whole-class discussion of policy reviews and essays during the final two weeks of term. Grading in this area will be based on the initial assumption that everyone will get full credit in all areas of participation, with deductions made for negligent or "unthere" performance, if necessary.

A Note on Getting Ahold of the Books and Readings

All of the books for the course are available at the Rainbow Cooperative, 426 West Gilman Street, and the course pack of the other readings is available at Bob's Copy Shop, 1401 University Ave. You will readily note that you could spend a fair chunk of change on the readings for this course, in excess of \$200. So here are a few strategies for lessening the blow. 1) Use the reserve room at Steenbock. Everything is available there. 2) Go in with a friend or two on your purchases, and split the books up according to who wants which one at the end of the semester. 3) Sell the books back at the end of the semester.

With regard to my own book, we will discuss in class an environmental charity for me to send the royalties to.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week One: Introduction

9/7 Seminar

No reading.

9/8 Conversation Lab

Wikipedia. 2006. "Environmental Sociology" in *Wikipedia—The Free Encyclopedia*. Retrieved August 25, 2006, from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Environmental_sociology. 1p.

THE MORAL

Week Two: Envisioning Environmental Sociology I

9/14 Seminar

Bell, Michael M. 2004. *An Invitation to Environmental Sociology*. Second edition (with Michael S. Carolan). First half of book.

Stiles, Kaelyn and Michael Mayerfeld Bell. 2004. "About the Book—and Figure 1.1—and the Cover," in *Instructor's Manual for An Invitation to Environmental Sociology*, second edition, pp. 1-6.

9/15 Conversation Lab

Leopold, Aldo. 1961 (1949). "The Land Ethic," in *A Sand County Almanac*. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books. Pp. 237-264.

Week Three: Envisioning Environmental Sociology II

9/21 Seminar

Bell, Michael M. 2004. *An Invitation to Environmental Sociology*. Second edition (with Michael S. Carolan). Second half of book.

9/22 Conversation Lab

Shellenberger, Michael and Ted Nordhaus. 2004. *The Death of Environmentalism: Global Warming Politics in a Post-Environmental World*. Retrieved August 18, 2005, from www.thebreakthrough.org.

Week Four: The Realist-Constructionist Debate

9/28 Seminar

Carolan, Michael S. 2005. "Society, Biology and Ecology: Bringing Nature Back into Sociology's Disciplinary Narrative through Critical Realism." *Organization and Environment*.

Freudenburg, William R., Scott Frickel and Robert Gramling. 1995. "Beyond the Nature/Society Divide: Learning to Think about a Mountain," *Sociological Forum* 10: 361-392.

Murphy, Raymond. 2004. "Disaster or Sustainability: The Dance of Human Agents with Nature's Actants." *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology* 41(3): 249-266.

9/29 *Conversation Lab*

Evanoff, Richard J. 2005. "Reconciling Realism and Constructivism in Environmental Ethics." *Environmental Values* 14(1): 61-81.

First critique due 10/1.

THE MATERIAL

Week Five: The Treadmill of Consumption

10/5 *Seminar*

Schor, Juliet. 2005. *Born to Buy: The Commercialized Child and the New Consumer Culture*. New York: Scribner.

10/6 *Conversation Lab*

Sahlins, Marshall. 1972. "The Original Affluent Society," in *Stone Age Economics*. New York: Aldine. Pp. 1-39.

Week Six: The Treadmill of Production

10/12 *Seminar*

Bell, Michael M. 2006. "Welcome to the Consumption Line: Sustainability and the Post-Choice Economy." Paper delivered at the *Sustainable Consumption and Society* conference, Madison, WI, June 3, 2006. 18pp.

Gould, Kenneth, David N. Pellow, and Allan Schnaiberg. 2004. "Interrogating the Treadmill of Production: Everything You Wanted to Know about the Treadmill but Were Afraid to Ask." *Organization and Environment* 17(3): 296-316.

O'Connor, James. 1991. "On the Two Contradictions of Capitalism." *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism* 2 (3, Oct.): 107-109.

Wright, Eric O. 2004. "Interrogating the Treadmill of Production: Some Questions I Still Want to Know About and Am Not Afraid to Ask." *Organization and Environment* 17(3): 317-322.

10/13 *Conversation Lab*

Winner, Langdon. 1986. "Do Artifacts Have Politics?" Pp. 19-39 in *The Whale and the Reactor: A Search for Limits in an Age of High Technology*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

First musings on policy review due.

Week Seven: The Human Tragedy?

10/19 *Seminar*

Diamond, Jared. 2005. *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*. New York and London: Penguin.

10/20 *Conversation Lab*

Hardin, Garrett. 1968. "The Tragedy of the Commons." *Science* 162 (13 Dec.): 1243-48.

Week Eight: The Great Sustainability Debate: From Malthus to Justice

10/26 Seminar

Chapman, Robert. 1999. "No Room at the Inn, or Why Population Problems Are Not All Economic." *Population and Environment* 21(1): 81-97.

Hardin, Garrett. 1992. "The Ethics of Population Growth and Immigration Control." Pp. 6-7 in *Crowding Out the Future: World Population Growth, US Immigration, and Pressures on Natural Resources*, Robert W. Fox and Ira H. Melham, eds. Washington, DC: Federation for American Immigration Reform.

Malthus, Robert Thomas. 1796 (1798). "Preface" and "Chapter 1." Pp. 15-21 in *An Essay on the Principle of Population*. Philip Appleman, ed. New York: Norton.

Sen, Amartya. 1981. "The Great Bengal Famine," pp. 52-85 in *Poverty and Famines: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Simon, Julian L. 1980. "Resources, Population, Environment: An Oversupply of False Bad News." *Science* 208 (#4451, June 27): 1431-37.

10/27 Conversation Lab

Sachs, Wolfgang, ed. 2002. *The Jo'burg Memo: Fairness in a Fragile World*. 2nd edition. Berlin, Germany: Heinrich Böll Foundation.

Second critique due.

THE IDEAL

Week Nine: Environment, Domination, and Culture

11/2 Seminar

Korten, David. 2006. *The Great Turning: From Empire to Earth Community*. Berrett-Koehler.

11/3 Conversation Lab

Banerjee, Damayanti and Michael M. Bell. (In press; forthcoming, 2007.) "Ecogender: Locating Gender in Environmental Social Science." *Society and Natural Resources*. 19pp.

Week Ten: The Rise of Concern for the Environment

11/9 Seminar

Beck, Ulrich and Johannes Willms. 2003. *Conversations with Ulrich Beck*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

11/10 Conversation Lab

Inglehart, Ronald. 1995. "Public Support for Environmental Protection: Objective Problems and Subjective Values in 43 Societies." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 28(1):57-72.

Second musings on policy review due, with preliminary bibliography.

Week Eleven: What Is Nature Anyway?

11/16 Seminar

Cronon, William. 1995. "The Trouble with Wilderness, or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature." Pp. 69-90 in *Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature*, William Cronon, editor. New York: W.W. Norton.

Williams, Raymond. 1980 (1972). "Ideas of Nature," in *Problems in Materialism and Culture*. London: Verso. Pp. 67-85.

11/17 Conversation Lab

Bell, Michael Mayerfeld. 1994. "The Natural Conscience," pp. 137-157 in *Childerley: Nature and Morality in a Country Village*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Week Twelve: Risk and Justice

11/20 Optional Seminar

Klinenberg, Eric. 2002. *Heat Wave: A Social Autopsy of Disaster in Chicago*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

THE PRACTICAL

Week Thirteen: Organizing the Ecological Society

11/30 Seminar

Brown, Lester R. 2006. *Plan B 2.0: Rescuing a Planet Under Stress and a Civilization in Trouble*. New York: Norton.

12/1 Conversation Lab

No new reading.

Third critique due.

Weeks Fourteen and Fifteen

12/7, 12/8, 12/14, 12/15

In-class discussion of policy reviews and essays. First draft of policy review or essay due via email to entire class 48 hours before the class in which it is to be discussed.

Final Due Date for All Work

December 20th, 5pm.