

Instructor: Michael M. Bell  
340C Agricultural Hall

Fall, 2005  
University of Wisconsin-Madison  
T/R 1-2:15, 144 Van Hise

**Sociology/Rural Sociology 948**  
**SEMINAR: ENVIRONMENTAL SOCIOLOGY**

If life is conversation, then surely the conversation about, and between, environment and society is as broad and important as any, if not more so. Environmental sociology is the effort to bring the insights of sociology to our understanding of this conversation about and between environment and society—which is exactly what we will try to do in this course, through an in-depth look at current literature and debates in the field.

This course, then, is not for the neophyte to the environmental sociological perspective. Rather, we will be moving fast and presuming a lot. The main practical goal of the course is to provide a detailed look at the context of the current conversation in environmental sociology, so as to prepare students for taking doctoral preliminary exams in the area, and for conducting research that contributes to or draws on environmental sociology.

The course is intended to be an occasion to read, to write, and to discuss. So please accept my invitation to engage in critical, cooperative interchange with each other (including me!). That's what a seminar should be all about. Call it the "three r's" of a seminar: reading, 'riting, and responding. We'll be doing plenty of all three this term.

The environmental conversation is enormous, however, which presents some complications in planning a course. Some areas of the current debate seem to me central enough that I feel confident in choosing the readings for them ahead of time; these are matters that shape the discourse of most speakers in the field. But others must be currently less central, although perhaps regrettably. So I have chosen ahead of time the readings only for the first half or so of the course. We will collectively choose the rest as the course progresses.

**Student Evaluation**

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

**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 list beneath that the works you covered in the piece, much as is done with a "review essay" (a standard kind of academic piece). 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, in the fourth, eighth, and twelfth weeks.

## **The Final Paper**

The central written work of the course will be the preparation of a 4000-5000 word (about 16 to 20 double-spaced pages) essay on environmental sociology. I have pretty much the standard “final paper” in mind here. But I am eager that this paper be something of use for you beyond the confines of this course. So I will be particularly interested in something that relates to your own graduate research, or something that helps you along in the process of figuring out what that might be.

Please note that a topic statement of your paper is due in the sixth week, and a revised topic statement and preliminary bibliography is due in the ninth week. 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 19th 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. Also, for each class someone will serve as “scribe,” taking notes on behalf of the whole group so others can concentrate on the discussion. The scribe will bring to the next class copies of an outline—no more than two sides of paper in length—of what was discussed in the previous class. We will begin each class with a review of the scribe’s outline, and we will conclude with a brief overview of the reading for the next class. 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:

- review of “scribe” notes from previous class
- “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” and as a “scribe”; 4) your engagement with the written work of other seminar members during in-class small-group discussions of critiques and during the whole-class discussions of critiques and final papers during the final three weeks of term. I will base grading in this area 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.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

### I. FINDING OUR TONGUES

#### Week One—The Death of Environmentalism

##### 1. *Introduction to the Course*

##### 2. *Is Environmentalism Dead?*

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](http://www.thebreakthrough.org).

#### Week Two—The Life of Environmental Sociology

##### 3. *Four Short Takes*

Buttel, Frederick H. 2002. "Has Environmental Sociology Arrived?" *Organization & Environment* 15: 42-54.

Dunlap, Riley E. 2002. "Environmental Sociology: A Personal Perspective on Its First Quarter Century." *Organization & Environment* 15: 10-29.

Foster, John Bellamy. 2002. "Environmental Sociology and the Environmental Revolution: A 25th Anniversary Assessment." *Organization & Environment* 15: 55-58.

Lutzenhiser, Loren. 2002. "Environmental Sociology: The Very Idea." *Organization & Environment* 15: 5-9.

##### 4. *Two Longer Takes*

Buttel, Frederick H. 2003. "Environmental Sociology and the Explanation of Environmental Reform." *Organization & Environment* 16(3): 306-344.

Buttel, Frederick H., Peter Dickens, Riley E. Dunlap, and August Gijswijt. 2002. "Sociological Theory and the Environment: An Overview and Introduction," pp. 3-33 in Riley E. Dunlap, Frederick H. Buttel, Peter Dickens, and August Gijswijt (Eds.) *Sociological Theory and the Environment: Classical Foundations, Contemporary Insights*. Oxford, England : Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

## II. SIX DEBATES

### Week Three—Can't They Get Over It? The Realism-Idealism/Nature-Society Debate

#### 5. Ethics

Curry, Patrick. 2003. "Re-Thinking Nature: Towards an Eco-Pluralism," *Environmental Values* 12: 337-360.

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

#### 6. Social Theory

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

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.

### Week Four—Still Spinning Wheels? The Treadmill of Production Debate

#### 7. Critiques

Foster, John Bellamy. 2005. "The Treadmill Of Accumulation: Schnaiberg's *Environment* and Marxian Political Economy." *Organization and Environment* 18: 7-18.

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.

*If you're new to the subject...*

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.

#### 8. Extensions

Bunker, Stephen G. 2005. "How Ecologically Uneven Developments Put the Spin on the Treadmill of Production." *Organization & Environment* 18: 38-54.

Overdeest, Christine. 2005. "Treadmill Politics, Information Politics, and Public Policy: Toward a Political Economy of Information." *Organization & Environment* 18: 72-90.

*First critique due.*

## **Week Five—The Vengeance of Dr. Pangloss? The Ecological Modernization Debate**

### *9. Critiques*

Fisher, Dana and William Freudenburg. 2001. "Ecological Modernization and Its Critics: Assessing the Past and Looking Toward the Future." *Society and Natural Resources* 14:701–709.

York, Richard, Eugene A. Rosa, and Thomas Dietz. 2003. "Footprints on the Earth: The Environmental Consequences of Modernity." *American Sociological Review* 68(2): 279–300.

York, Richard and Eugene A. Rosa. 2003. "Key Challenges to Ecological Modernization Theory: Institutional Efficacy, Case Study Evidence, Units of Analysis, and the Pace of Eco-efficiency." *Organization & Environment* 16(3): 273–288.

### *10. Extensions*

Marsden, Terry. 2004. "The Quest for Ecological Modernization: Re-Spacing Rural Development and Agro-Food Studies." *Sociologia Ruralis* 44(2): 129–146.

Mol, Arthur P. J. and Gert Spaargaren. 2005. "From Additions and Withdrawals to Environmental Flows: Reframing Debates in the Environmental Social Sciences." *Organization and Environment* 18: 91–107.

Scheinberg, Anne. 2003. "The Proof of the Pudding: Urban Recycling in North America as a Process of Ecological Modernisation." *Environmental Politics* 12 (4): 49–75.

## **Week Six—Is There Anything We Can Do About W? The Ecological Governance Debate**

### *11. The Environmental State*

Fisher, Dana R. and William R. Freudenburg. 2004. "Postindustrialization and Environmental Quality: An Empirical Analysis of the Environmental State." *Social Forces*, September 2004, 83(1):157–188.

Schlosberg, David and John S. Dryzek. 2002. "Political Strategies of American Environmentalism: Inclusion and Beyond." *Society and Natural Resources* 15:787–804.

### *12. Ecological Governance: Ecosystem Boundaries*

Barham, Elizabeth. 2001. "Ecological Boundaries as Community Boundaries: The Politics of Watersheds." *Society and Natural Resources* 14:181–191.

Blomquist, William and Edella Schlager. 2005. "Political Pitfalls of Integrated Watershed Management." *Society and Natural Resources* 18:101–117.

*Topic statement due.*

## **Week Seven—Are the People Always Right? The Environment and Participation Debate**

### *13. Participatory Resource Management*

Lane, Marcus B. 2001. "Affirming New Directions in Planning Theory: Comanagement of Protected Areas." *Society and Natural Resources* 14:657–671.

Parkins, John R. and Ross E. Mitchell. 2005. "Public Participation as Public Debate: A Deliberative Turn in Natural Resource Management." *Society and Natural Resources* 18:529–540.

Weber, Edward P. 2000. "A New Vanguard for the Environment: Grass-Roots Ecosystem Management as a New Environmental Movement." *Society and Natural Resources* 13 : 237-259.

### *14. Rethinking Participation*

Bryan, Todd A. 2004. "Tragedy Averted: The Promise of Collaboration." *Society and Natural Resources* 17:881–896.

Hurley, Patrick T. and Peter A. Walker. 2004. "Collaboration Derailed: The Politics of 'Community-Based' Resource Management in Nevada County." *Society and Natural Resources* 17:735–751.

Zwart, Ivan. 2003. "A Greener Alternative? Deliberative Democracy Meets Local Government." *Environmental Politics* 12(2): 23–48.

## **Week Eight—What Is Fair? The Environmental Justice Debate**

### *15. Finding Justice*

Downey, Liam. 2005. "The Unintended Significance of Race: Environmental Racial Inequality in Detroit." *Social Forces* 83(3):971–1008.

Scholsberg, David. 2004. "Reconceiving Environmental Justice: Global Movements and Political Theories." *Environmental Politics* 13(3): 517 – 540.

### *16. Extending Justice*

Garner, Robert. 2003. "Animals, Politics and Justice: Rawlsian Liberalism and the Plight of Non-humans." *Environmental Politics* 12(2): 3–22.

Seager, Joni. 2003. "Rachel Carson Died of Breast Cancer: The Coming of Age of Feminist Environmentalism." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*. 28 (3): 945-972.

Sargisson, Lucy. 2001. "What's Wrong with Ecofeminism?" *Political Theory and the Environment* 23(2): 52-64.

*Second critique due.*

### III. FIVE MORE DEBATES

#### Weeks Nine Through Twelve

Topics chosen by the class.

*Ninth week—revised topic statement, and preliminary bibliography, due.*

*Twelfth week—third critique due.*

#### Week Thirteen—What Is Missing from Environmental Sociology

In class discussion of seminar members' critical positions about environmental sociology. Choose one of your critiques for everyone to read.

### IV. KEEPING THE CONVERSATION GOING

#### Weeks Fourteen and Fifteen—Discussion of Student Papers

*First draft 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 19th, 5pm.*