

SOCIOLOGY 382
ENVIRONMENTAL SOCIOLOGY
Spring 2010

Instructor

Dr. Peter F. Korsching

216 East Hall

294-8322

pkorsch@iastate.edu

Web page: <http://www.soc.iastate.edu/class/soc382.html>

Class Meetings

6:00 – 9:00 PM Tues

211 East Hall

Office Hours

2:00-4:00 PM, T

9:30-11:30 AM, Th

Others by appointment

Course Text

Charles L. Harper, Environment and Society, 4th Edition

Course Reading Packet available through the ISU bookstore

This course is an overview of the interrelationships between the earth's natural environment and the societies human populations have created. The environment provides both potentials and limitations for human society development. It is the natural resource base on which all life ultimately depends. Human populations adapt and adapt to the environment through social organization and technology. These interrelationships among human populations, their organizations and technology, and the sustainability of the natural resource base will be examined. Specific objectives of the course are:

1. To acquaint students with sociological perspectives on the nature, breadth and scope of contemporary environmental issues.
2. To critically examine alternative policies and strategies for addressing environmental problems through the lens of sociological theories and methods.
3. To gain a deeper understanding of the sociological perspective of a contemporary environmental issue through its examination in the course project.

The course will be taught through a combination of lecture and discussion methods and class exercises. Lectures will be supplemented through readings from the text, other readings, and other materials such as videos.

Course grade will be based upon three exams, a collaborative (group) course project (writing a review essay and making a class presentation), and class participation. For full credit all assignments must be completed and turned in by class time on the dates they are due. Weighting of specific components in the evaluation is as follows:

	<u>Points</u>	<u>Percent of Grade</u>
Midterm exam I	40	20
Midterm exam II	40	20
Final exam	40	20
Review essay	40	20
Class participation	<u>40</u>	<u>20</u>
Total	200	100

Tentative grading scale (the final course grades will include pluses and minuses):

A	=	180 – 200 points
B	=	160 – 179 points
C	=	140 – 159 points
D	=	120 – 139 points
F	=	119 or fewer points

Class participation includes attendance (being physically present), and keeping up with reading assignments, participating in class discussion and exercises, and completing occasional assignments designed to help in the comprehension of the material (being intellectually present). Class participation will include several quizzes throughout the semester worth 2 points each and based on readings for that day. Students will receive 2 points for the correct answer(s), 1 point for being in class, or a zero for missing the quiz. Quizzes cannot be made up. Signup sheets also will be passed around on some days. Students will receive 1 point for being present and signing the sheet. Also as part of class participation, students will receive questions to be answered in writing on the readings in the reading packet to be turned in during the class period the reading is discussed. Answers to these questions will receive up to 4 points depending on the quality of the answers.

Class lectures and discussions will contain material not included in the assigned readings, and exam questions will reflect readings, lectures, and discussions. Exams will be in-class, short answer essay type.

Makeup on exams and assignments will only be allowed for official university activities, illness, and other serious contingencies. To be eligible for makeup, the reasons for absence must be verified through official documentation.

REVIEW ESSAY

An objective of the course is for students to gain a deeper understanding of the sociological perspective on environmental issues and insight into and appreciation of sociological scientific research and writing, along with the need to understand other people's views and the necessity for collaboration in addressing environmental issues. Working in groups of three to five, students will write a review essay based on articles in academic scientific journals. Each student in the group will select from a sociology or other scientific journal one article written by sociologist(s) and/or other social scientist(s) on an agreed upon topic related to the environment. For each group an author of at least one article must be a sociologist. The topic and article selections must be approved by the instructor.

The review essay

- The review essay is not an essay on the selected topic.
- The review essay is not simply a summary of the articles.
- The review essay is a critical review articles on a related topic in which the reviewers evaluate the contribution of the articles to the topic relative to each other and in the context of existing knowledge on the topic. It is a critical comparative review of the articles' objectives, theory, methods, findings, conclusions/recommendations, and contributions to knowledge.

Suggested organization for the review essay

- Begin with a brief introductory discussion of the environmental issue addressed by the articles.
- Next, briefly discuss (summarize) the objectives, major arguments, support for the arguments, and conclusions of each article.
- Then, discuss differences and/or similarities in approaches and perspectives used by the authors, the degree to which they complement, supplement or contradict each other, and how convincingly the authors make their arguments or reach their objectives (this part should be given the most emphasis in the review essay).
- The essay ends with a discussion of the contributions of the articles toward the knowledge base for understanding the issue addressed.
- The essay must integrate relevant ideas, concepts, theories, and information/data from the text, other class readings, and class discussions (This is important! Many essays lose points because of insufficient attention to this requirement. More is better!).
- All works cited in the essay must be included in a list of references with a full bibliographic citations.

Final draft of the essay should be a hard (paper) copy, approximately 8-10 double spaced pages in length in 12 point type, with the abstracts of the three articles attached.

Topic selection and group organization

Early in the course (January 19) students will be asked to submit three potential topics of interest for the review essay. The list of topics will be compiled and shared with the students before the next class meeting. Students can use this information to identify others with similar interests and organize their groups. Groups must have at least three but no more than five students. Groups will identify tentative titles for the essay and have them approved by the end of the period.

Article selection

Articles must come from academic journals. Articles from popular journals or magazines will not be accepted.

Topic and articles must be selected and submitted for approval no later than February 9. The approval process will require submitting the following, either paper copy or electronically:

- Topic or title for the review essay
- Information on three or more articles to include the following for each article:
 - Journal title, volume and date
 - Article title and page numbers
 - Author(s) name(s)
 - Abstract as printed in the journal
 - Information provided in the journal on the authors' institutional affiliation and position

Initially submitting more articles than the number of members in the group may facilitate approval by increasing the probability of having appropriate articles. Do not wait until the last day to search for articles. Articles not available in the library stacks or free of charge online through the library may be obtained through interlibrary loan.

Potential article sources

Although there are many journals in which relevant articles may be found, a list of the more prominent journals includes:

Society and Natural Resources	Agriculture and Human Values
Rural Sociology	Organization and Environment
Sociologia Ruralis	Water Resources Bulletin
Impact Assessment Bulletin	Journal of Soil and Water Conservation
Journal of Rural Studies	Human Organization
Environmental Education	Community Development Journal
American Journal of Alternative Agriculture	Journal of the Community Development Society
Human Ecology	

Some articles also may be found in mainstream sociology journals such as:

American Sociological Review
American Journal of Sociology
Social Forces
Sociological Quarterly
Pacific Sociological Review

Preliminary draft evaluation

Groups desiring feedback on their essays to allow revision prior to handing in the final draft for grading will receive such feedback if a hard (paper) copy of the draft is submitted by 12:00 Noon, April 8. Final draft of the essay in hard (paper) copy is due at the time of the class presentation.

The class presentation

Class presentations will be scheduled at the end of the semester. Each group will have 20 to 30 minutes for the presentation, depending on the total number of presentations. Use of power point is suggested, but the exact nature of the presentation is left to the group's creativity. The class presentation should summarize the major points of the review essay.

Review essay evaluation criteria (30 points for the written essay, 10 points for the class presentation)

Provides a title that is descriptive of the topic.

Begins with a discussion of the environmental issue addressed by the articles.

Discusses (summarizes) the objectives, major arguments, support for the arguments, and conclusions of each article.

Discusses differences and/or similarities in approaches and perspectives used by the authors, the degree to which they complement, supplement or contradict each other, and how convincingly the authors make their arguments or reach their objectives.

Ends with a discussion of the contributions of the articles toward the knowledge base for understanding the issue addressed.

Integrates relevant ideas, concepts, theories, and information/data from the text, other class readings, and class discussions.

Provides a list of references with a full bibliographic citation for each work cited in the essay, and a copy of the abstract for each of the three articles reviewed is attached.

Class presentation is logically organized, informative, creative, and adheres to the criteria above.

Group evaluation

To help assure that students receive due credit for their work on the class project, each student will have the opportunity to evaluate the contribution of every student in the group including their own contribution. Completing the evaluation is a class requirement.

IMPORTANT ADDITIONAL COURSE INFORMATION

***ACADEMIC DISHONESTY:** University regulations will be followed in all cases of academic dishonesty. Proven academic dishonesty (not doing your own work, cheating on an exam, plagiarism, etc.) will result in automatic failure of the course.*

SOCIOLOGY CODE OF ETHICS FOR HUMAN RELATIONS:

The Department of Sociology is committed to providing a professional and educational environment that is free of discrimination and harassment. The department's Code of Ethics for Human Relations and the Procedures for Filing Complaints of Discrimination or Harassment are posted on the bulletin boards on all five floors of East Hall.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:

Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately no later than the second week of class to discuss your specific needs. Also contact the Disability Resources Office at 515-294-6624 in room 1076, Student Services Building to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

COURSE OUTLINE*

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Reading</u>
Jan 12	Course Organization & Introduction to Environmental Sociology	Harper Chapt 1
Jan 19	Intro to Environmental Sociology (cont.) SUBMIT THREE POTENTIAL REVIEW ESSAY TOPICS (Jan 19)	Harper Chapt 1, Diamond
Jan 26, Feb 2	Natural Resources: Potentials and Problems REVIEW ESSAY TOPIC SELECTION AND GROUP ORGANIZATION (Jan 26)	Harper Chapt 2, Weinberg etal**
Feb 2, 9	Global Climate Change & Risk and Risk Assessment SUBMIT REVIEW ESSAY ARTICLES FOR APPROVAL DUE (Feb 9)	Harper Chapt 3
Feb 16	EXAM I & Risk and Risk Assessment (cont.)	Gunter & Kroll-Smith**
Feb 23, Mar 2	Energy and Society	Harper Chapt 4
Mar 9	Population and Environment	Harper Chapt 5, Pp. 151-173
Mar 15-19	SPRING BREAK	
Mar 23	Food and Agriculture	Harper Chapt 5, Pp. 173-191, Newspaper article ***
Mar 30	EXAM II & Growth and Sustainability	Harper Chapt 6
Apr 6	Growth and Sustainability (cont.) REVIEW ESSAY PRELIMINARY DRAFT DUE (Apr 8, optional)	Harper Chapt 6, Checker**
Apr 13	Markets and Policy	Harper Chapt 7, Fox**
Apr 20	Markets and Policy & Class Presentations	
Apr 27	Class Presentations REVIEW ESSAY DUE (at class presentation)	
May 4	FINAL EXAM	

*Dates for exams, topics and readings may be adjusted to meet class needs.

**Reading Packet

***To be assigned in class

SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS and DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Diamond, Jared M. 2004. "Lessons from Environmental Collapses of Past Societies." Pp. 8–25 in *Report of the 'Water for a Sustainable and Secure Future' Conference*. Washington D. C.: National Council for Science and Environment.

Available at: http://ncseonline.org/2004conference/PDF/jared_diamond_report.pdf

1. How does Easter Island differ ecologically today from when it was first settled?
2. Explain the social/cultural causes of the changes on Easter Island that occurred between first being settled and the ultimate fate of the population.
3. Were there natural environment causes that contributed to the ecological changes on Easter Island, and if so, what were they?
4. What was the final fate of the people on Easter Island and why did they suffer that fate?

Weinberg, Adam S., Allan Schnaiberg, and Kenneth Gould. 1995. "Recycling: Conserving Resources or Accelerating the Treadmill of Production?" *Advances in Human Ecology* 4: 173-205.

1. From the different perspectives of the three constituencies involved—1) the state, 2) industry, and 3) environmentalists—what factors initially made recycling a viable policy for the environmental issues of expanding land fills, energy use, and pollution?
2. How has the treadmill of production affected the environmental goals of the recycling policy?

Gunter, Valerie and Steve Kroll-Smith. 2007. *Volatile Places: A Sociology of Communities and Environmental Controversies*. Thousand Oaks CA: Pine Forge. Chapter 4, "The Problem of Uncertain Knowledge."

1. Explain what the authors mean in their statement (p. 112), "...facts are not incontrovertible statements of what is true. ...A fact never speaks for itself; it always speaks for a scientific, theoretical, political, religious, or perhaps personal agenda."
2. What distinguishes "community" knowledge from "scientific" knowledge and how does power come into play in acceptance or rejection of either type of knowledge?
3. In any local environmental issue there often is both a vertical axis of knowledge claims and a horizontal axis of knowledge claims. Explain each of these two types of knowledge claims and discuss their role in intensifying and/or resolving uncertainty surrounding environmental issues.

Checker, Melissa. 2005. *Polluted Promises: Environmental Racism and the Search for Justice in a Southern Town*. New York: New York University Press. Chapter 4, "From Promised Land to Poisoned Land."

Background: Hyde Park, a neighborhood in the urban fringe of Augusta, Georgia, was settled during the middle third of the last century by Blacks. The land was swampy with nearby industries. Because of these characteristics, Whites had no interest in the property and it provided an inexpensive opportunity for Blacks to become homeowners. The Hyde Park neighborhood was always ignored by Augusta in terms of community services, and in 1990 the Hyde and Aragon Park Improvement Committee (HAPIC) was organized to obtain water, gas, sewer service, streetlights, paved roads, flood control, and police protection from Augusta. Over the years further industrialization occurred, and in 1990a class action lawsuit was settled by one of the corporations (Southern Wood Piedmont [SWP]) with a nearby predominantly white neighborhood because of groundwater pollution. Hyde Park was never informed of the lawsuit and so it was not a party to it. In the early 1990s environmental testing revealed high concentrations of chemicals in Hyde Park's water and soil. HAPIC assumed the challenge of getting relief from the pollution and compensation for loss of property values for the neighborhood's residents.

Questions:

1. Explain the special significance of becoming home owners and of the importance of gardens for Hyde Park residents?
2. What meanings were attached by Hyde Park residents to the neighborhood being "downgraded?"
3. Why did the residents of Hyde Park, most of whom were both poor and Black, believe their environmental problems were a result of racism (being Black) rather than classism (being poor)?
4. What were the value distinctions Hyde Park residents made between the "land" and the "environment," and why did they make that distinction.

Fox, Julia. 1999. "Mountaintop Removal in West Virginia: An Environmental Sacrifice Zone." *Organization and Environment* 12 (2): 163-183.

1. What is the nature and scope of the problem that Fox addresses in the article, and how is the problem associated with the treadmill of production and the political power of coal companies in West Virginia?
2. What does Fox mean when she states (p.176), "The regulation of strip mining in West Virginia is a classic example of how formal legal equity conceals the actual economic and political power of the coal interests and how this regulation became extraordinarily mutable when the coal interests exerted their power."
3. What are the loopholes in the laws on mountaintop coal mining and why are they there? Who benefits from these loopholes and who pays the costs of the loopholes?