

ENVS 201: Introduction to Environmental Studies—Social Sciences

(a.k.a. Why smart people do dumb things to the planet...)

Fall 2015 Tuesday/Thursday 10:00-11:20 182 Lillis Hall

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New York Stock Exchange during Hurricane Sandy 2012

Environmental Studies 201 introduces some of the major contributions of the social sciences to understanding why environmental problems happen—the social ‘root causes’ of these problems. This course is not about environmental topics (climate change, deforestation, toxics, etc.). It is about learning to think more deeply and critically about why these problems happen and what it might take to solve them. Humans aren’t stupid, and environmentally harmful human behavior isn’t inevitable: rather, it is a product of specific social as well as physical conditions. Those conditions can be studied and understood. An understanding of the social root causes of environmental problems is an essential step in finding effective ways to prevent and resolve such problems. As such, this course critically examines both mainstream and non-conventional approaches to understanding and resolving environmental problems, including ideas such as ‘sustainability’, ‘market-based’ environmental policies, reforms of property systems, and social movements to promote concepts such as environmental justice, ecofeminism, and deep ecology. In this course students will learn to think critically about the strengths and weaknesses of these approaches and how these approaches can be used in integrative and interdisciplinary ways.

Course requirements: The course grade will be based on the following: eight in-class, closed-notes quizzes (8 x 5pts each=total 40pts); discussion section attendance and participation (20pts); and a final exam (40pts). The quizzes will consist of multiple-choice questions. Quizzes cover lectures and readings since the previous quiz up to and including readings assigned for the day the quiz is given. The quizzes include all course materials: lectures, readings, and videos. Quizzes will not be announced in advance, so full attendance and preparation for lectures is essential. **THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A MAKE-UP QUIZ OR EXTRA CREDIT.** In case of documented health or family emergencies, a quiz may be excused. Lecture outlines will be available on Canvas after the class but do not substitute for in-class note-taking. **LAPTOPS CAN ONLY BE USED IN THE BACK OF THE LECTURE HALL; CELL PHONES MUST BE OFF—NO TEXTING, FACEBOOK, ETC.** There is no textbook. Required readings are available in PDF on Canvas.

Course Objectives:

Through this course, you will be able to:

- Identify major social science approaches to understanding environmental why environmental problems occur
- Apply your knowledge of social science approaches to the understanding of environmental problems to create your own critical, integrative and interdisciplinary diagnoses of why human do harm to the environment
- Using your knowledge of social science approaches and your own critical analysis, offer your own ideas of what it will take to create more sustainable and just human-environment relations

As a result of this course, you will:

- Understand approaches that social science disciplines use to examine and address environmental issues
- Have skills to conduct research on environmental issues that takes into account diverse social science perspectives
- Be able to go beyond failed conventional wisdoms about how to solve environmental problems

We're here for you!

One of the mysteries of teaching is how infrequently students use instructor and teaching assistant office hours. We're here for you. If you're confused about the lectures or readings, please ask! We will gladly answer. Office hours: Peter Walker: Weds 1:30-2:30, Thurs 2:30-3:30 in 100 Condon Hall. Emily Dinan: Tues 9-10am and 4:30-5:30 in 47A Columbia Hall. Julie Bacon: Tues 11:30-12:30; Jaleel Reed: Weds 12-1; [COMPLETE GTF OFFICE HOURS TBA ASAP]

On group study:

We strongly encourage group study. The only time collaboration is not permitted is on quizzes and the final exam. If you share Google docs or other kinds of study notes, please share them to your GTF or to the instructor so that we can make sure the notes are correct.

On cheating:

(This doesn't apply to 99% of you!) There is no such thing as cheating *outside* of quizzes and the final exam. We encourage collaboration. But on the exam and quizzes we have zero tolerance for cheating. Smartphones, body cameras, Bluetooth devices... just put that energy into studying. Failure to do so will result in severe disciplinary action. Respect others, respect *yourself*, don't do it.

Always in progress:

This course is always a work in progress. The world changes, new issues arise, new materials become available. So your instructor reserves the right to change reading materials and lecture themes. If you read ahead more than two class sessions, be aware the readings could change. You can help—if you know readings, videos, web pages, etc., that could benefit the class, please tell us!

Schedule and Readings (must be read before class each day)(see Bibliography, next page)

- Lect. 1 Sept. 29 Introduction & overview: social science perspectives on the environment; course and discussion section mechanics
- Lect. 2 Oct. 1 The Tragedy of the Commons (Ostrom & Burger 1999; Guardian 2015)
- Lect. 3 Oct. 6 Population (Sherbinin et al. 2007; UN 2015)
- Lect. 4 Oct. 8 Environmental Economics (Jaeger 2005; EPA 2011, pp. 9-28)
- Lect. 5 Oct. 13 Ecological Economics (Daly 1993; Rees 2003)
- Lect. 6 Oct. 15 Globalization and Trade (Frankel 2008; James 2011)
- Lect. 7 Oct. 20 Corporate Social Responsibility (Porter & Kramer 2006; Anderson 2010[!])
- Lect. 8 Oct. 22 Consumerism (DeGraaf 2001; Leonard 2010)
- Lect. 9 Oct. 27 Political Economy (Magdoff & Foster 2010)
- Lect. 10 Oct. 29 Political Ecology (Adams & Hutton 2007)
- Lect. 11 Nov. 3 Environmental Law (watch video: A Civil Action)
- Lect. 12 Nov. 5 Environmental Justice (Bullard 2008; Pellow 2007, pp. 97-103)
- Lect. 13 Nov. 10 Sustainability (Adams 2006; Rees 1997)
- Lect. 14 Nov. 12 Ideas of Nature (Kinsley 1995 Christianity; Kinsley 1995 Nature; Pope Francis 2015)
- Lect. 15 Nov. 17 Deep Ecology (Taylor & Zimmerman 2005; Leopold 1949)
- Lect. 16 Nov. 19 GUEST LECTURE TBA
- Lect. 17 Nov. 24 Ecofeminism (Shiva 1988; Hobgood-Oster 2005)
- Thursday-Friday, Nov. 26-27 THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY, NO CLASS, ENJOY!
- Lect. 18 Dec. 1 Putting critical social science to work: the case of climate change (IPCC 2014)
- Lect. 19 Dec. 3 Final exam review
- FINAL EXAM: 8:00am (*sorry!!!!*) Wednesday, December 9, in 182 Lillis Hall

Bibliography

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