

**Macalester College  
Department of Sociology  
SOCI-194.01 / ENVI-194.01**

**Environmental Sociology**

Fall 2018  
MWF 1:10-2:10 pm  
Carnegie Hall, Room 206

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**Synopsis**

This course provides an overview of environmental activism, politics, and policy making in the United States in historical and comparative perspective.

More specifically, we address the following questions:

Are human societies destined to environmental collapse?  
What are the fundamental obstacles to sustainable economies in democratic-capitalist societies?  
How did environmental lobbies emerge?  
How have these environmental organizations evolved in the last half-century?  
Has consumer activism greened US markets and corporations?  
Which political networks have led the campaigns to regulate greenhouse gases in US?  
Why have these campaigns failed?  
Who opposes environmental action on climate change, and why?  
Why have the US and Europe responded differently to the problem of global warming?  
What are the prospects for a quick transition from a fossil-fuel economy to one based on clean energy?

**Required Texts Available For Purchase**

Wright, Ronald. 2004. *A Short History of Human Progress*. New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers/Avalon Publishing. ISBN 978-0-7867-1547-3

Pooley, Eric. 2010. *The Climate War: True Believers, Power Brokers, and The Fight to Save the Earth*. New York: Hyperion. ISBN 978-1-4013-2326-4.

Smil, Vaclav. 2010. *Energy Myths and Realities: Bringing Science to the Energy Policy Debate*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield. ISBN 978-8-0844-7432-8.

## **Assignments/Grading**

Class attendance (10%) and participation (10%) amount to 20% of the final grade.

Two take-home exams, each worth 40% of your grade, totaling 80%.

An optional term paper, due on the last day of class, may account for 20% of your grade, if elected. Under this option, your take-home exams would represent 60% of your grade. This paper should not exceed 10 pages.

## **Readings**

### **Week 1. Introductions**

September 5, 7

Rudel, Thomas K., J. Timmons Roberts and JoAnn Carmin. 2011. "Political Economy of the Environment." *Annual Review of Sociology* 37: 221-38.

## **Part I. Pre-industrial Civilizations and the Environment**

### **Week 2. Human Evolution and the Environment: Hunters and Gatherers**

September 10, 12, 14

Wright, *A Short History of Human Progress*. Chapter 1-3.

### **Week 3. From Climax to Collapse: The Fragile Ecology of Kingdoms and Empires**

September 17, 19, 21

Wright, *A Short History of Human Progress*. Chapters 4-5.

### Suggestions for Further Reading

Redman, Charles. 1999. *Human Impact on Ancient Environments*. Tuscon, AZ: University of Arizona Press.

Tainter, Joseph. 1988. *The Collapse of Complex Societies*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Ruddiman, William F. 2005. *Plows, Plagues, and Petroleum: How Humans Took Control of Climate*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Fagan, Brian. 2004. *The Long Summer: How Climate Changed History*. New York: Basic Books.

## **Part II. Industrial Civilization and the Environment**

### **Week 4. Capitalism, Democracy, and Social Order**

September 24, 26, 28

Cook, Terrence. 1991. *The Great Alternatives of Social Thought: Aristocrat, Saint, Capitalist, Socialist*. Savage, MD: Rowan & Littlefield Publishers. Pp. 1-18.

Lindblom, Charles. 1977. *Politics and Markets*. New York: Basic Books. Pp. 119-33, 161-221.

## **Part III. The Challenge of Ecological Modernization: Civil Society and the Market Economy**

### **Week 5. Environmental Advocacy: From Social Movement to Estate of the Realm**

October 1, 3, 5

Bosso, Christopher J. 2005. *Environment, Inc.: From Grassroots to Beltway*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas. Pp. 1-8, chapters 2, 4.

Screening of:

Corporation for Public Broadcasting. American Experience. WGBH Boston. 2010. *Earth Days*. Arlington, VA: PBS Video.

A synopsis of postwar environmental activism, from Johnson to Reagan

#### Suggestions for Further Reading

Berry, Jeffrey. 1999. *The New Liberalism: The Rising Power of Citizen Groups*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution.

Bruelle, Robert J. and J. Craig Jenkins. 2008. "Fixing the Bungled US Environmental Movement." *Contexts* 7(2): 14-18.

Shellenberger, Michael and Ted Nordhaus. 2004. *The Death of Environmentalism: Global Warming Politics in a Post-Environmental World*. Oakland, CA: The Breakthrough Institute.

Skocpol, Theda. 2003. *Diminished Democracy: From Membership to Management in American Civic Life*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press.

Straughan, Baird and Tom Pollak. 2008. *The Broader Movement: Nonprofit Environmental and Conservation Organizations, 1989-2005*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, National Center for Charitable Statistics.

### **Week 6. Environmental Organizations, Consumer Activism, and the Corporation**

October 8, 10, 12

Vogel, David. 2004. *The Market for Virtue: The Potential and Limits of Corporate Social Responsibility*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press. Pp. 46-56, chapters 5, 7.

### **Part IV. The Challenge of Ecological Modernization: The Politics of Climate Change**

### **Week 7. The Rise of the Climate Action Partnership: The Environmental Defense Fund, Environmental Economics, and Corporate America**

October 15, 17, 19

Pooley, *The Climate War*. Parts Three (True Believers) and Five (Breaking the Veto), pp. 55-101, 137-175.

Screening of:

Corporation for Public Broadcasting. Frontline. WGBH Boston. 2012. *Hot Politics*. Arlington, VA: PBS Video.

An overview of environmental politics during the Clinton and Bush Administrations

### **Week 8. Cap and Trade: The Defeat of the Lieberman-Warner Climate Bill**

October 22, 24

Pooley, *The Climate War*. Parts Six (Disaster Training), Seven (Repower America), and Eight (Save the Planet? Save the Economy!), pp. 179-322.

Screening of:

Guggenheim, Davis. 2012. *An Inconvenient Truth*. Hollywood; CA: Paramount Pictures. The celebrated Hollywood documentary that re-ignited the drive for a national policy on climate change.

**Midterm Break, October 25-28**

## **Week 9. Cap and Trade: The Defeat of the Waxman-Markey Climate Bill**

October 29, 31, November 2

Pooley, *The Climate War*. Part Nine (The Path), pp. 325-420.

Lizza, Ryan. 2010. "As the World Burns: How the Senate and the White House Missed Their Best Chance to Deal with Climate Change." *New Yorker* 86 (31) October 11: 70-83.

Pooley, *The Climate War*. Epilogue (Copenhagen, December 2009), pp. 423-441.

## **Week 10. The Ascendancy of the Counter Mobilization Against Climate Change Policies**

November 5, 7, 9

Pooley, *The Climate War*. Part Two (The Denier's Convention), pp. 33-51.

Screening of:

Corporation for Public Broadcasting. Frontline. WGBH Boston. 2012. *Climate of Doubt: The Politics of Global Warming*. Arlington, VA: PBS Video.  
The triumph of climate change skepticism within the Republican Party.

### Suggestions for Further Reading

Layzer, Judith. 2012. *Open for Business: Conservatives' Opposition to Environmental Regulation*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

## **Part V. Competing Trajectories of Environmental Action**

### **Week 11. Climate Politics in the United States and Europe**

November 12, 14, 16

Vogel, David. 2012. *The Politics of Precaution: Regulating Health, Safety, and Environmental Risks in Europe and the United States*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Chapters 1, 4, 7, and 8.

**Week 12. Climate Politics in the United States and Europe (cont.)**

November 19

No Readings.

**Thanksgiving Break, November 21-25****Part VI. The Limits of Alternative Energy Sources****Week 13. Past Predictions for a Green Future**

November 26, 28, 30

Smil, *Energy Myths and Realities*. Introduction, Chapters 1-4.

**Week 14. The Prospects for Moving Beyond Fossil Fuels**

December 3, 5, 7

Smil, *Energy Myths and Realities*. Chapters 5-8.

**Week 15. Summations and Assessments**

December 10, 12

**Classes End**