

Environment and Society

Social Analysis of the Environment

Course Teachers

Dr Uri Gordon
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Course Structure

13 x 3 hour lectures

Course Purpose –

This is an introductory course to the environmental social sciences. Students will acquire knowledge of central theories and approaches in the social sciences, and of their application to environmental issues. A special emphasis is given to the interaction between social structure, technology and ideology in shaping environmental changes and responses to them.

Course Grading –

- Participation: 15%
- Midterm task: 35%
- Final Exam: 50%

Course Texts and Readings –

Required readings will be made available online and in class. It is expected that students will read prescribed readings BEFORE their class. Details of prescribed readings can be found within the course schedule.

Course Schedule –

Lecture One : Introduction class

Course admin • Global environmental problems • Systems thinking

Required Reading:

- Frey ch.1

Lecture Two: Paradigms in social theory

Ecosystems and social systems • Paradigms: order and conflict, atomic and relational

Required Reading:

- Harper ch.1
- Frey ch.3

Recommended Reading:

- Ch.1-2 of F. Buttel, A. Gijswijt, P. Dickens and R. Dunlap, Sociological Theory and the Environment. Rowman & Littlefield, 2002

Lecture Three: Resources, Sinks, Commons

Soil, Water and Biodiversity • Waste and Pollution • The debate around the Commons

Required Reading:

- Harper ch.2
- G. Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons", Science, Dec. 1968
- T. Dietz, E. Ostrom and P. Stern, "The Struggle to Govern the Commons", Science, Dec. 2003

Recommended Reading:

- W. Adams, D. Brockington, J. Dyson and B. Vira. "Managing Tragedies: Understanding Conflict over Common Pool Resources". Science, Dec. 2003

Lecture Four: Population

Modern population dynamics • Population and poverty • Stabilizing population

Required Reading:

- Harper ch.5
- Frey ch.8

Recommended Reading:

- Ch.7-8 of L. Betzig, Human Nature: A Critical Introduction. Oxford University Press, 1997

Lecture Five: Environmental justice

Race, class and exposure • Environmental democracy • Case study: Israel's Bedouin

Required Reading:

- Frey ch.5
- Ch.10 of Alon Tal, Pollution in a Promised Land: An Environmental History of Israel. University of California Press, 2002.

Recommended Reading:

- Frey ch.6
- S. Swirsky and Y. Hasson. "Invisible Citizens: Israel government policy toward the Negev Bedouin". Adva Center, 2006. <http://www.adva.org/UPLOADED/NegevEnglishFull.pdf>

- I. Mealem and Y. Garb. "The exposure of Bedouin women to waste related hazards", *Women and Environments*, Fall/Winter 2006.

Lecture Six: Political Economy

Dialectical materialism • Metabolic Rift • Uneven and combined development

Required Reading:

- Frey ch.4
- Frey ch.9

Recommended Reading:

- Ch. 3 and 11 of Sociological Theory and the Environment

Lecture Seven: Energy

The energy cycle • Peak oil • Technological and social alternatives

Required Reading:

- Harper ch.4
- A. Grubb, "Peak Oil Primer". <http://energybulletin.net/primer>

Recommended Reading:

- J. B. Foster, Peak Oil and Energy Imperialism. Monthly Review, Jul. 2008. <http://www.monthlyreview.org/080707foster.php>

Lecture Eight: Technology

Social nature of technologies • Technology and culture • Assessing technologies

Required Reading:

- Ch.1-3 of L. Winner, The Whale and the Reactor. Chicago University Press, 1983

Recommended Reading:

- Frey ch.17

Lecture Nine: Environmental Perceptions

Required Reading:

- D. Shome and S. Marx. 2009. The psychology of climate change communication http://cred.columbia.edu/guide/pdfs/CREDguide_full-res.pdf
- I. Lorenzoni, S. Nicholson-Cole and L. Whitmarsh. "Barriers perceived to engaging with climate change among the UK public and their policy implications". Global Environmental Change 17, 2007

Recommended Reading:

- Frey ch.10

Lecture Ten: Sustainable development

Globalization • Economic growth and the environment • Sustainable development

Required Reading:

- Harper ch.6
- Frey ch.20

Recommended Reading:

- S. Beder, "Hijacking Sustainable Development: A Critique of Corporate Environmentalism", Chain Reaction 81. <http://www.uow.edu.au/~sharonb/esd/chainreaction.html>

Lecture Eleven: Environmental movements

History of Environmentalism • Mobilization dynamics • The role of identity

Required Reading:

- Harper ch.8
- Frey ch.14

Recommended Reading:

- Frey ch.13

Lecture Twelve: Sustainability in the Middle East

Cross-boundary cooperation • Challenges • Environmental peace-building

Required Reading:

- United Nations Environment Program, From conflict to peacebuilding: The role of natural resources and the environment, February 2009
- GTZ, The Water Security Nexus: Challenges and Opportunities for Development Cooperation. August 2010

Lecture Thirteen: Summary and conclusions