Eastern Illinois University  
New Course Proposal  
SOC 3820, Environmental Sociology

1. Catalog Description  
a. Sociology 3820  
a. Environmental Sociology  
c. 3-0-3  
d. F  
e. Enviro Sociology  
f. Examines the interrelations between the natural environment, social organization, and social behavior. Attention is directed at both the social causes of and social responses to various environmental problems.  
g. Prerequisite: SOC 1838G or permission of the instructor

2. Objectives of the Course  
Discussion of the major themes within the field of environmental sociology. More specifically, the following objectives will be addressed in detail:  
• An understanding of how aspects of culture, including political and economic institutions, influence our views of the natural environment.  
• An understanding of the various social causes of our environmental problems including: consumption, materialism, development, and population growth.  
• An understanding of the impact of technology on our relationship to the natural environment.  
• An understanding of environmental racism and related movements for environmental justice.  
• An understanding of the key concerns and social dynamics of both the historical and contemporary U.S. environmental movements.  
• An understanding of the emerging global environmental movement.  
• An understanding of current efforts to organize an environmentally sustainable society.  

This course is writing-active.

3. Outline of the Course  
Weeks 1 & 2 Organization and Orientation Chap. 1 Text  
Introduction to Environmental Sociology  
Emergence of the Field  
Environmental Problems as Social Problems  
State of the Natural Environment  
Air & Water Pollution  
Climate Change  
Vanishing Wilderness  
Diminishing Resources  
Readings:  

Week 3  Theoretical Concerns
- Classical Sociological Theory & The Environment
- Political Economy & The Environment
- Dominant Social Paradigm
- Societal-Environmental Dialectic

Reading:

Social Causes of Environmental Problems
Weeks 4 & 5  Consumption, Materialism, and the Environment  Chap. 2 Text
Material Bases of the Human Condition
Culture, Consumption, and Materialism
Affluence as an Environmental Problem
Treadmill of Consumption
Advertising & Green Advertising
Simplicity Movement

Exam #1

Weeks 5 & 6  Money, Machines, and the Environment  Chap. 3 Text
Treadmill of Production
Consumption & Production
Corporate Power & Environmental Exploitation
Technology: Curse or Cure?

Week 7  Population, Development, and the Environment  Chap. 4 Text
Dynamics of Population Growth
Environmental Limitations
Malthusian Argument
Inequality Critique of Malthusian Argument
Underdevelopment & Famine
Demographic Critique of Malthusian Argument
Women & Development, Family Planning
POET Model

Reading:
Social Responses to Environmental Problems

Week 8  Environmental Domination as an Ideology  Chap. 5 Text
- The Importance of Ideology
- Religion & Environmental Domination
- Individualism & Environmental Domination
- Gender & Environmental Domination
- Ecofeminism

Week 9  Environmental Concern  Chap. 6 Text
- Historical Foundations: Rome, Greece, & China
- Moral & Material Bases for Environmental Concern
- Who Cares About the Environment?
  - Social Position & Environmental Concern

Reading:

Week 10  Environmental Racism

Environmental Justice

Readings:

Exam #2

Weeks 11&12  The U.S. Environmental Movement
- American Environmental Movement: 1870-1950
  - John Muir
  - Sierra Club
  - Forest Reserve Act & National Parks
- Contemporary Environmental Movement
- Government Action & Inaction
- Environmental Catastrophes & Public Opinion
- Grassroots Environmental Movements
- NIMBY
Readings:


Week 13 Global Environmental Movement
Environmental Degradation as a Global Problem
Political, Institutional, and Economic Challenges
Global Stratification and Environmental Concern
Multinational Corporations

Readings:


Sustainable and Equitable Environmental Future

Week 14 Sustainable Development
Economics, Ecology, and Equity
Politics and Policy
Sustainability and Social Change
Functionalism, Conflict, Interactionism, Agency & Structure

Readings:


Week 15 Organizing and Ecological Society Chap. 8 Text
Reorganizing Social Institutions
Reorganizing Communities
Reorganizing Lives

Reading:

Final Exam

Evaluation:
First Exam 20%
Second Exam 20%
Final Exam 30%
Writing Assignment #1 15%
Writing Assignment #2 15%

4. Implementation
a. Initial instructor: Darren Hendrickson
b. No additional cost to students
c. Texts for the course:
d. Sociology 3820 will be offered Fall 2002

5. Rationale Purpose and Need
a. Over the last few decades, environmental sociology has emerged as a major topical area within the discipline of sociology. Further, there has been interest in this topic among sociology majors at Eastern Illinois University for several years. Moreover, it is increasingly common for undergraduate sociology programs across the nation to offer a course in environmental sociology. Finally, the course offers an additional dimension for students in environmental biology.
b. Justification of the level of the course and prerequisite
This course is numbered at the 3000 level because the content, workload, and expectations for this course are consistent with other Junior-level courses. The prerequisite of Principles of Sociology (SOC 2710) ensures that students have sufficient exposure and grounding in the discipline of sociology before introducing students to a sociological analysis of issues surrounding the environment. Permission of the instructor enables students with environmental backgrounds from other disciplines to take the course.
c. Similarity to existing courses and/or effect upon programs in other departments
   This course does not duplicate any current course offerings. However, other
   social science departments offer courses related to the environment. For
   example, the Political Science Department offers Environmental Politics and
   Policy and the Economics Department has a course titled Economics of Natural
   Resources. And, the Department of Biological Sciences offers a course titled
   Environmental Life Science. While there may be some limited overlap in content
   between these courses and the proposed Environmental Sociology, the
   existence of these courses illustrate the need for unique disciplinary perspectives
   addressing issues surrounding the natural environment. Environmental
   Sociology fills a niche by providing an analysis of how social organization and
   social behavior impact our relationship with the natural environment. In fact, the
   head of the Environmental Biology Program, Dr. Robert Fischer, has indicated
   that he would like to make this course an elective for Environmental Biology
   majors.

d. Required or Elective
   This course will be an elective for sociology majors, minors, and possibly for
   students in the Environmental Biology option of the Biological Sciences major.

6. Community College Transfer
   A community college course will not be judged equivalent to this course

7. Date Approved by the Department of Sociology and Anthropology 4-2-01

8. Date Approved by the College of Sciences Curriculum Committee 4-20-01

9. Date Approved by the Council on Academic Affairs 6-21-01

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