

SOP77152 Ecological Crisis and Ecological Futures

Module Content:

This module examines the unfolding ecological crisis of modern industrial society as, from a sociological perspective, the central conflict of our times. It explores key theoretical and substantive concerns in a critical evaluation of the relationship between human beings and the natural world, the interactions between society and environment, and the linkages between social issues and environmental problems. To do so, the module engages students to consider the subfield of environmental sociology, its central themes and foci, to explore environmental and ecological thought more generally, to reflect on historical and sociological dimensions of the environmental movement, and to engage with contemporary debates. The module brings all of this to bear in a critical analysis of the politics of ecological crisis, the contestation of differing crisis diagnoses, and the contrasting potential ecological futures currently imagined and anticipated within contemporary society. Here three contemporary movements will be examined encapsulating the different futures of: ecological modernization and green capitalism; ecosocialism, ecofeminism, and postcapitalism; authoritarianism, ecofascism, and neofeudalism. The module is thus particularly concerned with the societal dimensions of ecological crisis and the sociological concerns of power and conflict, seeking to assess the challenge of sustainability in terms of the political and ethical questions it raises.

Module Learning Aims and Outcomes:

On successful completion of this module, students will have:

- Gained an understanding of the environmental movement and environmental and ecological thought as well as knowledge of environmental sociology
- Developed an ability to identify and critically evaluate the social causes of environmental problems and critically consider potential solutions in turn
- Attained a deeper understanding of the social challenges posed by anthropogenic climate change and sensitivity towards the ethical issues it raises
- Gained a critical understanding of ecological politics and the associated ecological futures anticipated by contending political projects
- Developed an ability to articulate and develop their own stance on environmental issues

Recommended Reading List:

Required and recommended readings will be provided each week. The following are recommended as general background and introductory texts for the field of environmental sociology and are by no means intended as a definitive canon.

Bell, M. (2012) *An Invitation to Environmental Sociology*. 4th ed. London: SAGE.

Dunlap, R.E., Buttel, F.H., Dickens, P. and Gijswijt, A. (2002) *Sociological Theory and the Environment: Classical Foundations, Contemporary Insights*. Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Harper, C. (2012) *Environment and Society: Human Perspectives on Environmental Issues*. 5th ed. Pearson Education.

Martell, L. (1994) *Ecology and Society: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Pepper, D. (1989) *The Roots of Modern Environmentalism*. London: Routledge.

Redclift, M. and Woodgate, G. (eds.) (2010) *The International Handbook of Environmental Sociology*. 2nd ed. Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar.

Redclift, M. and Woodgate, G. (eds.) (1995) *The Sociology of the Environment*. 3 volumes. Brookfield, VT: Edward Elgar.

Redclift, M. and Benton, R. (eds.) (1994) *Social Theory and the Global Environment*. London: Routledge.

Assessment Details:

Presentation: 20%

Written assignment: 80%