The goal of this course is to provide a relatively comprehensive introduction to the field of environmental sociology, an area of inquiry that focuses on the relationship between society and the physical environment, including its historical development and several important contemporary topics and debates. It will not, however, cover crucial topics such as environmental justice and disasters because the Department has courses devoted to them, and for the same reason will give only partial coverage to work on the international dimensions of environmental problems.

The weekly required readings, listed on the remainder of the syllabus, will be posted on D2L. The “recommended” readings, noted with an asterisk, will not be posted. They are listed for those who wish to explore the weekly topics in more detail.

The course will be conducted as a seminar—although the instructor will often offer short overviews/comments, particularly early in the course, to help put the weekly readings into context—and students are expected to be prepared to discuss the assigned readings in depth. As reinforcement for adequate preparation, 20 percent of the course grade will be based on contributions (both quality and quantity) to class discussions. In addition, each week individual students will be assigned one of the required readings, and will prepare a short abstract of it to share with other members and then give a 10-12 minute presentation on the article. Your discussion should first provide a brief but adequate summary of the main points, key arguments, etc. of the article, and then your own evaluation of it—with the goal of stimulating in-depth class discussions. These outlines and presentations will count toward another 30 percent of your grade.

The remaining 50 percent of the grade will be based on a term paper that focuses on a topic of your own choosing, as long as it is highly relevant to the material covered in the course. The paper may range from 15 to 20 pages in length, but should provide an in-depth analysis of your chosen topic. Please give me a brief summary/outline of your proposed paper by March 1st, so that I can provide you with any necessary feedback concerning revising your focus and/or offer guidance to relevant literature. The final draft is due on Wednesday, May 4th, 5:00 pm.

The overall quality of a seminar clearly depends upon contributions from all participants, and your participation each week is vital. Students are expected to attend each week, and if an emergency/illness prevents this you should notify the instructor in advance. Missing more than one week without a very good excuse will lower your grade.
Week 1 (1/12) - Introduction to the Course

Week 2 (1/19) - Overview and Evolution of the Field of Environmental Sociology


Week 3 (1/26) - Paradigmatic Implications of Environmental Sociology


**Week 4 (2/2) - Risk Society and Its Critics**


Week 5 (2/9) - Ecological Modernization Theory and Its Critics


Week 6 (2/16) - The Social Constructivist Challenge to the “Materiality” of Environmental Sociology


**Week 7 (2/23) - Realist-Based Responses to “Strong” Constructivism (and Ontological Relativism)**


**Week 8 (3/1) - Toward Syntheses: Analyses of the Complexity of Societal-Environmental Relations and Coupled Human-Natural Systems (CHANS)**

Week 9 (3/8) - The Social Construction of Global Environmental Change & Climate Change


SPRING BREAK (3/15)

Week 10 (3/22) - The "Deconstruction" of Climate Change by Industry, Conservative Think Tanks and Contrarian Scientists


Week 11 (3/29) – Sociology and Climate Change: Diverse Perspectives


**Week 12 (4/5) - Causes of Environmental Degradation (the POET, IPAT and STIRPAT models)**


Week 13 (4/12) - Social-Structural Analyses of Environmental Degradation I: World Systems Theory and Ecologically Unequal Exchange


Week 14 (4/19) - Social-Structural Analyses of Environmental Degradation II: The "Treadmill of Production"


**Week 15 (4/26) – Refining (Specifying) the Treadmill: Corporate Characteristics, Disproportionality, Ecological Rifts and the Jevons Paradox**


Term papers due 5:00 p.m., Wednesday, May 4th