

## **COURSE SYLLABUS**

### **SES1909H Eco-Sociology**

Fall 2008  
Thursday 5:30-8:30 p.m.  
Room: TBA

Instructor: Margrit Eichler  
E-mail: meichler@oise.utoronto.ca

#### **Course Description**

This course will look at the state of the environment, and how we deal (and refuse to deal) with it in the social sciences, as well as in life in general. The theoretical starting point is the assumption that environmental issues and social equity issues are necessarily and inextricably intertwined. The second part of the course will focus on what we can do to ameliorate the situation, and to recognize the opportunities in the challenges that confront us. Students will select their own examples of positive action, either from scholarship or from life, as well as determine the latter portion of required readings.

#### **Introduction**

- Goals and structure of the course
- Introduction of participants
- Unnumbing ourselves
- Dealing with overwhelming facts
- War, peace and environmental sustainability

#### **The Current Situation**

- Our ecological footprint
- Global distribution of riches
- Control over water
- Control over food production
- Control over the human genome
- Control over communications
- Control over the transportation system

The Alberta tar sands  
The "Tragedy of the Commons"  
The ecological debt of rich countries  
The peaking of oil

*Read:* Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2007)  
Wackernagel and Rees (1996: 7-16 + 79-91)  
Oziewicz (2006)  
Elliott (2006)  
Shiva (2002, 19-37 + 87-105)  
Shiva (2000: 79-124)  
Kneen (1999: 51-62 + 155-168)  
Smith Lea (2000)  
Zielinski (1995)  
Kempf (2007)  
Hardin (1968)  
Pfeiffer (2006)  
Finn (2006)  
Skeet (2008)

## **The Relationship between Un/sustainability and Social In/equity**

Theoretical connections  
Ecofeminism  
    Its potential  
    Its roots  
    Its critique  
The environmental crisis and global inequity

*Read:* Eichler (2000)  
Warren (1993)  
Gaard (1998, pp.11-52 + 286-292)  
Davion (1994)  
Simms (2005)  
George (2007)

## **Environmental Issues and Sociology**

Sociology's seeming incapacity to deal with environmental issues  
The constructionist approach

*Read:* Catton and Dunlap (1980)  
Hannigan (1995: 5-31)

Eichler (1999)

### **What Can We Do?**

Changing our food habits/the food system  
Changing our transportation habits/the transportation system  
Educating ourselves/changing the education system  
Changing our living style/urban planning/green architecture  
Recognizing environmental refugees  
Becoming politically active/changing our political/military/economic system

### **Integrating Environmental Issues into Sociology and/or Education**

Some selected resources:

The Earth Charter [www.earthcharter.org](http://www.earthcharter.org)

The Insnet newsletter, a Dutch based newsletter on environmental news:  
[subscriber@insnet.org](mailto:subscriber@insnet.org)

A Canadian initiative [www.justearth.net](http://www.justearth.net)

The Suzuki Foundation [www.davidsuzuki.org](http://www.davidsuzuki.org)

### **REQUIREMENTS:**

1. Active class participation – this includes preparing one substantive question or comment for each piece of required reading for discussion in class and e-mailing it to the instructor by the Friday preceding a class by 12 am (25% of grade). Please use the following file name for your submission: Yourname.Comment#1.doc, e.g. Eichler.Comment#1.doc, next week it is Comment#2 etc. Please observe the spacing, and please put your name in front of each individual reading.
2. Pick one positive initiative and prepare an oral presentation on it (25% of grade). Select two readings to go along with your presentation, and either distribute hard copies or the URL (if available on the web) the week before your presentation. All other students will then send in their comments as usual about these readings.
3. Either prepare a course outline on any sociological or educational topic and integrate environmental issues into it with a short (about 5 pp) reflective paper on the challenges inherent in this, or prepare a module on environmental

issues for elementary or high school with a short reflective paper or write a medium length paper (about 15 pp) about one concrete way of moving into a more sustainable direction. This may (or may not) continue the work you started for # 2. Each option equals 50% of the grade and is due April 9.

### Required Readings

**Please buy the Simms book at the Toronto Women's Bookstore, 73 Harbord St., Toronto e-mail: [twb@web.net](mailto:twb@web.net)**

- Catton, William R., and Riley E. Dunlap. 1980. "A new ecological paradigm for post-exuberant sociology." *American Behavioral Scientist* 24(1):15-47.
- Davion, Victoria. 1994. "Is ecofeminism feminist?" Pp. 8-28 in *Ecological Feminism*, edited by Karen J. Warren. Routledge.
- Eichler, Margrit. 1999. "Considering sustainability from a feminist sociological perspective: A framework for disciplinary reorientation." Pp. 182-206 in *Sustainability and the social sciences. A cross-disciplinary approach to integrating environmental considerations into theoretical reorientation*, edited by Egon Becker, and Thomas Jahn. Zed Books in association with ISOE and UNESCO/MOST.
- . 2000. "In/equity and un/sustainability: Exploring intersections." *Environments: A Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies* 28(2):1-10.
- Elliott, Larry. 2006. "Even tiny transaction tax would raise billions to fight poverty." *CCPA Monitor* 13(1):42.
- Finn, Ed. 2006. "Oil=dependent civilization will end before century does." *CCPA Monitor* 13(6):4-5.
- Gaard, Greta. 1998. *Ecological politics. Ecofeminists and the Greens*. Temple University Press.
- George, Susan. 2007. "Environmental crisis calls for Wold-War-II-type collaboration." *CCPA Monitor* 14(7):26-28.
- Hannigan, John A. 1995. *Environmental sociology. A social constructionist perspective*. Routledge.
- Hardin, Garrett. 1968. "The tragedy of the commons." *Science* (162):1243-1248.
- Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. 2007. "Climate change 2007: Synthesis report. Summary for policymakers." [http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar4/syr/ar4\\_syr\\_topic1.pdf](http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar4/syr/ar4_syr_topic1.pdf).
- Kempf, Herve. 2007. "Tar sands development is a global environmental disaster."

CCPA Monitor 14(7):45-47.

Kneen, Brewster. 1999. *Farmageddon. Food and the Culture of Biotechnology*. New Society Publishers.

Oziewicz, Estanislao. 2006. "The rich really do own the world." *Globe and Mail*, Dec. 5, 2006.

Pfeiffer, Dale Allen. 2006. "Without oil, families will go hungry, not just their SUVs." *CCPA Monitor* 12(10):21-24.

Shiva, Vandana. 2000. *Stolen harvest. The hijacking of the global food supply*. South End Press.

—. 2002. *Water wars. Privatization, pollution, and profit*. Between the Lines.

Sims, Andrew. 2005. *Ecological debt. The health of the planet and the wealth of nations*. Pluto Press.

Skeet, Jillian. 2008. "It's time to take action on global emergency." *Rabble News*, January 2.

Smith Lea, Nancy. 2000. "Colliding modes of transportation: Issues of inequity and unsustainability." *Environments: A Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies* 28(2):11-22.

Wackernagel, Mathis, and William Rees. 1996. *Our ecological footprint: Reducing human impact on the earth*. New Society Publishers.

Warren, Karen J. 1993. "The power and promise of ecological feminism." Pp. 320-341 in *Environmental philosophy. From animal rights to radical ecology*, edited by Michael E. Zimmerman, J. Baird Callicott, George Sessions, Karen J. Warren, and John Clark. Prentice Hall.

Zielinski, Sue. 1995. "Access over excess: Transcending Captivity and Transportation Disadvantage." Pp. 131-156 in *Change of Plans. Towards a non-sexist, sustainable city*, edited by Margrit Eichler. Garamond Press.