Sociology
University of Newcastle

Semester 2, 2008-09

Sociology of the environment
SOC 3067

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Teaching Assistant: Mr Youba Raj Luintel
E-mail:

Credits: 20
## Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lectures</th>
<th>Date and time</th>
<th>Venue</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>10 in total</strong></td>
<td>Weeks 29-35 and 40-42, see programme in page 6</td>
<td>Daysh Building Room 2.5</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wednesdays, 11am-1pm</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seminars (5 in total)</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>(see Seminar Programme in page 22)</strong></td>
<td>Weeks 30-34, see programme in page 22</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>GROUP 1:</strong></td>
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<td>Mondays 2-3 pm</td>
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<td><strong>GROUP 2:</strong></td>
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<td>Mondays 3-4 pm</td>
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<td><strong>GROUP 3:</strong></td>
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<td>Tuesdays 2-3 pm</td>
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<td><strong>GROUP 4:</strong></td>
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<td>Tuesdays 3-4 pm</td>
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Aims and objectives

Environmental problems such as global climate change, global warming, deforestation, desertification, the intensification of extreme events (hurricanes, floods, heat waves, etc.), the pollution of air, water and soil by human activities, or the impact of water-related problems on human health constitute some of the most difficult challenges facing human society in the Twentieth-first Century. What role can sociologists play in addressing these challenges? What are the contributions made by sociologists to the environmental debate? And how does sociology help in practical terms? What progress has sociology made in contributing to the production of scientific knowledge about the environment? These are examples of some of the questions that we plan to explore and debate in this module.

SOC3067 has been designed to provide a balanced introduction to key social theory debates about environmental problems complemented with empirical examples derived from recent and ongoing research at the international level. The link between theory and empirical evidence will be further developed in the seminar sessions.

The module will address the foundations for the study of environmental problems in the main sociological traditions (how different sociological traditions have addressed environmental issues). It will also explore the relationship between sociology and other social sciences in the interdisciplinary study of environmental problems.

Among other topics we will explore the roots of sociological thinking about the environment in the classical sociologists and in the main currents of twentieth-century sociology; agency and structure; the realism/constructivism debate; sociology and the interdisciplinary study of environmental conflicts (political ecology; social movements); the relationship between social justice and environmental justice; environmental citizenship and governance; globalization and the environment; the interrelation between environmental and social change in a long-term perspective (e.g. the evolution of socio-ecological regimes; environment and development).

By the end of the module students should have acquired an understanding of key theoretical and policy debates and of the main competing approaches in the sociology of the environment. They should also develop an understanding of the role played by sociological theory in the increasingly interdisciplinary field of environmental studies, and have a clearer picture of the opportunities for research and professional work in relation to the environment open to sociology students after graduation.
A note on the reading list: we may add more materials later on, especially for the seminars.

Module Assessment

The module will be assessed by two pieces of work: an Analytical Exercise (2000 words) and 1 Essay (2000 words).

The assignments have to be submitted electronically through the Turnitin system, see final page of this module outline.

Deadline for Analytical Exercise: 13 March 2009 12 noon

Deadline for Essay: 8 May 2009 12 noon

See the “Assessment Guidelines” in page 24.
# Lecture programme

Date and time: Wednesdays 11am-1pm  
Venue: Daysh Building Room 2.5

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>4 February 2009</td>
<td>Introduction. Sociology and the environment: mapping the debate</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>11 February 2009</td>
<td>The environment in pre-sociological and classical thinkers</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>18 February 2009</td>
<td>The environment in 20th century sociology</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>25 February 2009</td>
<td>The realism/constructivism debate</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>The agency/structure debate</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>11 March 2009</td>
<td>Ecological distribution conflicts</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>18 March 2009</td>
<td>Environmental governance and citizenship</td>
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<td>EASTER BREAK</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>22 April 2009</td>
<td>Environment and development I: theoretical debates</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>29 April 2009</td>
<td>Environment and development II: experiences from developing countries</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>6 May 2009</td>
<td>Towards the emergence of a new socio-ecological regime?</td>
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Key readings


Suggested background readings


**See also articles in the following journals**

(These journals are available through Newcastle University’s Library. Some are exclusively dedicated to environmental issues while others publish individual articles on environmental problems):

American Journal of Sociology
Annual Review of Sociology
Capitalism, Nature, Socialism
Contemporary Sociology
Ecology and Society
Environment and Behavior
Environment and Planning A, C, D
Environment and Urbanization
Environment, Development and Sustainability
Environmental Politics
Futures
Geoforum
Global Environmental Change
Global Environmental Politics
International Journal of Sociology of Agriculture and Food
International Journal of Urban and Regional Research
Journal of Environment & Development
Organization & Environment
Regional Environmental Change
Rural Sociology
Social Science Quarterly
Social Forces
Social Problems
Society & Natural Resources
Sociological Forum
Sociological Quarterly
Sociological Spectrum
Theory and Society
Urban Studies

See also the following journals:

Environmental Values

Human Ecology (http://maxweber.hunter.cuny.edu/anthro/ecology.html)

Journal of Political Ecology: Case Studies in History and Society (http://jpe.library.arizona.edu/)

Sociology
Class 1 – 4 February 2009

Introduction. Sociology and ecological processes: mapping the field

Main reading for this class:


Complementary reading:


Class 2 – 11 February 2009

The environment in pre-sociological and classical thinkers

Main reading for this class:


Complementary reading:


Class 3 – 18 February 2009

The environment in 20th century sociology

Main reading for this class:


Complementary reading:


Class 4 – 25 February 2009

The realism/constructivism debate

Main reading for this class:


Complementary reading:


Class 5 – 4 March 2009

The agency-structure debate

Main reading for this class:


Complementary reading:


Class 6 – 11 March 2009

Ecological distribution conflicts

Main reading for this class:


Complementary reading:


Class 7 – 18 March 2009

Environmental governance and citizenship

Main reading for this class:


Complementary reading:


EASTER BREAK
Class 8 – 22 April 2009

Environment and development I: theoretical debates

Main reading for this class:


Complementary reading:


Class 9 – 29 April 2009

Environment and development II: experiences from developing countries

Main reading for this class:


Complementary reading:


Class 10 – 6 May 2009

Towards the emergence of a new socio-ecological regime?

Main reading for this class:


Complementary reading:


# Seminar programme

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<th>Group</th>
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<td>“Sustainable development”</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>9 March, 2-3pm</td>
<td>King George VI Building Room 2.37</td>
<td>Environmental governance and global climate change</td>
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Assessment Guidelines

NOTE: THESE ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES ARE PROVISIONAL

Assessment 1: the analytical exercise

The analytical exercise will consist in a 2000-word paper developing a critical comparative analysis of arguments put forward by sociologists about a theoretical or empirical problem related to the environment. The students will work on 2-3 articles or book chapters choosing one of the 4 options from the list below.

The exercise consists in identifying and developing an analysis of

- a) the main assumptions, hypothesis/es, or claims put forward by the authors
- b) their key concepts
- c) the internal coherence of their arguments
- d) the plausibility of their arguments to describe/explain the problem being discussed
- e) the applicability of the arguments to a wider set of problems
- f) other relevant aspects identified by the student.

This will be a comparative exercise, looking at the pros and cons of how different sociologists approach a particular environmental event or process. What is the main question or problem being addressed in the texts? What are the key concepts deployed by the authors to construct their argument? What are the main theoretical traditions the can be identified in the authors’ approach? What are the main points of agreement and disagreement between the authors? How plausible their arguments are? Do you agree or disagree with them? Why?

The paper should be structured with:

1) a brief introduction (100-150 words)
2) the comparative analysis, which can be divided in 5 sections corresponding to points a-e as described above
3) a brief conclusion summarizing your main findings (maximum 200 words).

Deadline for the Analytical Exercise: 13 March 2009 12 noon

Options for the Analytical Exercise:

To be announced
Assessment 2: the essay

This is a 2000-word paper to be submitted in standard essay format (include word count). It should draw on theoretical and empirical materials seen in the module. However, it is recommended that the students make their own research for suitable texts and materials (including documents, press reports, web resources, etc.), reflecting topics of their own interest even if they have not been addressed in the module. These materials should reflect a sociological approach to the chosen topic (if in doubt, consult the module leader). You can choose both historical and contemporary empirical examples from the UK or from other countries.

The essay must include a proper introduction and conclusion, and a reference list of works cited in the text. For advice on essay writing, including referencing, please check the relevant library’s web pages: http://www.ncl.ac.uk/library/teaching/stan/). The quality of the essay structure and referencing will be taken into account in evaluating the essays. Please, refer to the document “Referencing: a guide for students submitting work in sociology”, which can be found in the Sociology degree programmes handbooks (accessible via Blackboard).

You will have to submit a brief essay plan (150-200 words) indicating the topic chosen and discuss it in advance with the module leader. The essay plan should contain:

1) 1-2 key questions or problems that you will address in the paper
2) a reference to the main authors that you have already identified for your essay

Optional (as you may want to write your essay just on theoretical aspects):

3) an empirical example that you will use to develop the analysis (for instance: the social impact of the recent floods in the UK, the implementation of recycling policies in your city, the debate over a new generation of nuclear facilities in the UK, or cases of social struggle for environmental justice in Africa, the US, or Latin America, among many others that you can choose from the literature).

The deadlines are indicated below. We will further discuss these guidelines in the lectures if required.

**Deadline for essay plan:** 18 March 2009

**Deadline for essay:** 8 May 2009 12 noon
IMPORTANT: The provisional marks for any assessed component of a module are distributed with comments using a standard form. The standard practice is for marks and feedback sheets to be distributed through the GPS office within 4 term time weeks of submission deadlines. You will be emailed by the GPS Office when marks for the specific modules are available.

Submission of Assessment Work

You will have to submit it in electronic format using the Turnitin software. Below you can find the instructions.

How to use TurnitinUK

Newcastle University is committed to encouraging good academic conduct and fair assessment. To these ends, the University subscribes to TurnitinUK (the JISC Plagiarism Detection Service). This software permits academic staff to carry out comparisons of students' work with that of other students and with other print and electronic sources.

The School of Geography, Politics and Sociology requires that all written assessments are uploaded to TurnitinUK so that we can attempt to ensure that no student gains an unfair advantage over another by plagiarising someone else’s work, submitting the same work for more than one assessment or by purchasing or downloading assessments over the internet.

This document aims to provide a step-by-step guide to using TurnitinUK. In the instructions you will practice by using a dummy module. All the information which you require to submit your work in real modules will be provided in the relevant module guides.

Using TurnitinUK

You can find TurnitinUK online at www.submit.ac.uk. A comprehensive Student User Guide can be found at https://submit.ac.uk/usage_jisc/tiiuk_student_guide.pdf

For Turnitin:

SOC3067 Class ID: 75969
Password: Castro