

# Environment, Natural Resources, and Society

Fall 2014

Instructor: John Chung-En Liu  
Email: [cliu63@wisc.edu](mailto:cliu63@wisc.edu)  
Office: 308A Agricultural Hall

Classroom: Engineering Hall 1213  
Lectures: Tue/Thu 12:30pm-1:45pm  
Office Hours: Tue 10am-12pm  
or by appointment

## COURSE OVERVIEW

Welcome to the course Environment, Natural Resources, and Society!

In this course, we will study the interaction between the human society and the natural environment. The key task is to understand that the natural system is closely knitted with our social system—environmental problems are, often, *social* problems. In the first half, this course will introduce key approaches and perspectives in environmental sociology such as “ecological footprint,” “risks and hazard,” “social construction of nature,” and “environmental justice.” In the second half of the course, we will spend time envisioning how transition to a more sustainable future could happen, and then use the above concepts as the foundation to examine two broad issues of concern—“food and agriculture” and “climate change.”

My goal is not to present a series of objective ‘facts’ for students to memorize, but instead, to help students learn to analyze socio-environmental problems with a sharp sociological lens. The course aims to engage real-world challenges and improve student’s skills at inquiry, analysis, and critical thinking.

Note: This syllabus is subject to change at the instructor’s discretion.

## COURSE MATERIALS

*Environment and Society: a Critical Introduction (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition)*. Paul Robbins, John Hintz and Sarah A Moore. London: Wiley Blackwell. 2014.

*True Wealth*. Juliet Schor. New York: Penguin Press. 2010.  
(Previously published as *Plenitude: the new economics of true wealth*)

Make sure you purchase the correct edition of *Environment and Society*. If you do not wish to buy these books, *Environment and Society* is on reserve at the College Library. *True Wealth* is available through the Ebook library (EBL) in the UW-Madison library system. Please search for the title “[Plenitude: the new economics of true wealth](#)” in the library.

Due to the inherent interdisciplinary nature of the class, we will read work not only of sociologists, but also biologists, economists, political scientist, geographers, and activists among others. All readings, lecture materials, and other key information will be available through [Learn@UW](http://Learn@UW).

**COURSE REQUIREMENT**

There are no midterms, quizzes, or final exams. Instead, this course requires a lot of reading, a lot of writing, viewing films, attending lectures, and consistent and active participation in discussion. Your grade will be based on your participation in class, short papers, book review, and the community participation project.

The grading rubric is as the following:

Participation	10%
Short Paper Assignment *8	40%
<i>True Wealth</i> Book Review	15%
Community Participation Project	35%

A = 93-100	AB = 86-93	B = 80-86	BC = 75-80
C = 70-74	D = 60-69	F = < 60	

**Participation (10%):**

Class attendance is extremely important for this course. I will exercise attendance checks from time to time. You are allowed to be absent without any reason ONCE. Beyond the first absence, you will lose 0.5 out of your 10 participation points for every absence. Please email me prior to class when you are unable to attend, need to leave early, or have to be late in the class. When you need walk in and out of the classroom during lecture, please be considerate to your classmates.

To do well in this class, you should finish the readings *before* class, listen attentively, join actively in the conversation, and ask critical questions during lectures. The quality of our collective learning experience depends on your participation. When I tally up the points at the end of the semester, participation will carry special weight when a student are close to getting the next letter grade up. This is completely up to my discretion.

**Short Papers (40%):**

In this course, you will write 8 two-page short papers, each account 5% of your final grades. Choose any 8 of the following 10 paper topics. You are encouraged to do all of these assignments. If you write more than 8 assignments, you can drop the lowest ones and keep the highest 8 scores.

- 1) Personal Ecological Footprint
- 2) Environmental Economics Problem Set
- 3) Critiquing *Tragedy of the Commons*
- 4) Film Commentary of *Tapped*
- 5) Mapping Environmental Inequality
- 6) Nature in the Chazen museum
- 7) Eat Local Challenge
- 8) Food Cultural Alternatives
- 9) Critical Self-Reflection on Climate Change
- 10) Film Commentary of *Chasing Ice*

***True Wealth* Book review (15%):**

In 1500 words (excluding references), write a critical review of *True Wealth*. This book review should be written with the reflexive narrative and first-person voice typical of web-style blog. I encourage you to connect your review with the approaches and perspectives covered in the first half of the course. In the review, you should:

- 1) Provide a short summary of *True Wealth*'s main arguments.
- 2) Critically evaluate Schor's principles of plenitude. Do you agree with the author? Do you have any experience engaging in the practices she mentioned in the book? What are some of the barriers to do so?
- 3) Discuss how the book/its principles could be strengthened. If you do not like her framework, provide your own principles for a sustainable future.

You are encouraged to use other scholarly materials to support your points. Please cite properly.

**Community Participation Project (35%):**

In this course, we strive to engage in social and environmental challenges in the real world. This exercise seeks to be the bridge between our classroom and your community. There are 3 components in this exercise: Proposal, Community Fieldwork, and Final Paper. The due dates are listed in the following course schedule.

***Proposal (5%):***

In early weeks of the semester, you need to identify a socio-environmental issue of your interests in your community. In your 2-page proposal, illustrate why the particular issue is important to you and your community, describe its background in a clear manner, and lay out a plan of your community fieldwork.

You are required to come to my office hour to discuss your paper topic. This is a necessary step to ensure that you can complete this semester-long assignment. The proposal is due on September 30<sup>th</sup>.

***Community Fieldwork:***

After you identify your topic, you need to engage in community to deepen your understanding of the issue. For example, you can observe social interaction in the farmer's market, make a trip to the Willy Street Co-op, conduct short interviews to your family or friends, or attend town hall meetings, volunteer for community events, etc. Be creative. Choose something of your interest. Have fun! The ideal fieldwork is the one that allows multiple participation opportunities throughout the semester.

In late October, we will dedicate one class to discuss your community participation project. It will be a valuable opportunity to gather useful feedback to your projects. Toward the end of semester, I may ask some of you to voluntarily present your project in class.

***Final Paper (30%)***

To sum up your project, you need to write up a 3000-word final paper to reflect on your experience. Your paper needs to 1) describe and reflect on your community participation activities, and 2) apply the approaches and perspectives to analyze your findings.

I strongly advise you to complete a first draft as early as you can and to take it to the Writing Center where you will be provided with an assessment of your writing and receive guidance on improvement.

### **Assignments**

Please print out (double-sided, please) your assignment and bring it to class on the due dates.

Assignments are due in class, and are considered late after class time. You will lose 20% of your points for the particular assignment for one late-day.

All writing should follow the format of 12-pt, Times New Roman, double line spacing, 1-inch margin. Please use spell check to avoid typos.

To become a more effective writer, I highly encourage you to take advantage of the resources at university's writing center: <http://www.writing.wisc.edu/>

### **Office Hour:**

My office is on Tuesday 10am-12pm, right before our class on Tuesday. If you need to meet up with me in times other than my regular office hours, you can make an appointment with me. It is usually easiest if you do so by email. Office hours will not be devoted to tutorial for materials that students miss when not attending class. Also, please strive to ask routine questions of clarification during the lecture.

### **Lecture Notes:**

Lecture slides will be posted on Learn@UW before each class. These notes are intended to provide you with a broad outline of the discussion, not specific details, so you will still need to take notes in class.

### **Academic Honesty:**

All of the work that you submit for this class must be your own work, and you are required to quote and cite all references properly. Although this appears straightforward, it can sometimes be confusing. Wherever you are unsure about quoting and citing, please come see me to figure out the best strategy. If you use a web-based source, you can always cite the URL.

For information about plagiarism policy:

<http://www.wisc.edu/students/saja/misconduct/UWS14.html#points>

Please take some time to read through this short introduction to "Acknowledging, Paraphrasing, and Quoting Sources": [www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/Acknowledging\\_Sources.pdf](http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/Acknowledging_Sources.pdf)

The University takes academic honesty very seriously. If you are found to be cheating on exams or papers, you will be reported to the Dean of Students.

### **Classroom Etiquette:**

One of my responsibilities is to ensure that the environment in the classroom is conducive to learning. If you are late, you should find a seat in the back of the classroom. If you need to leave early, please let

me know in advance and sit in a location where it will be easy to quietly leave the room. Please hold side-conversations and discussions until after class.

No use of Laptops, Tablets, Phones, or Other Electronic Devices. Although computers are a valuable tool for research and study, they often hinder participation and collegiality in the classroom. The use of laptops or other electronic devices for note taking or other purposes in class, therefore, will not be permitted.

### **Accommodation:**

I wish to include any students with special needs in this course. In order to enable you to participate fully, please let me know (the earlier the better) if you need any special accommodations in the curriculum, instruction or evaluation procedures. The McBurney Disability Resource Center (<http://www.mcburney.wisc.edu/>) will provide useful assistance and documentation.

## **COURSE SCHEDULE**

- Reading
- ◆ Assignment due

### **Approaches and Perspectives**

#### September 2: Course Introduction and getting to know each other

#### September 4: Introduction

- Read the syllabus carefully
- Michael Maniates. 2001. *Individualization: Plant a tree, buy a bike, save the world?*  
Read the [shortened version](#)
- *Environment and Society*, Chapter 1

#### September 9: Population and Scarcity

- *Environment and Society*, Chapter 2

#### September 11: Markets and Commodities

- *Environment and Society*, Chapter 3

#### September 16: Environmental Economics: a very brief introduction

(Guest Lecturer: Yating Chuang)

- “How economists see the environment” Donald Fullerton and Robert Stavins
- Nathaniel O. Keohane and Sheila M. Olmstead. 2007. *Markets and the Environment*. Chapter 1
- ◆ Due: “Personal Ecological Footprint”

September 18: Institutions and “The Commons”

- *Environment and Society*, Chapter 4
- Elinor Ostrom. 1990. *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 1 Reflections on the Commons Pp. 1-28.

September 23: Environmental Ethics

- *Environment and Society*, Chapter 5
- Guha, Ramachandra. 1989. ‘Radical American Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation: A Third World Critique’ *Environmental Ethics* 11: 71-83
- ◆ Due: “Environmental Economics Problem Set”

September 25: Risks and Hazards

- *Environment and Society*, Chapter 6
- ◆ Due: “Critiquing Tragedy of the Commons”

September 30: In-class documentary *Tapped*

- *Environment and Society*, Chapter 15
- ◆ Due: Community Participation Project Proposal

October 2: Political Economy I

- *Environment and Society*, Chapter 7
- Rudel, T. K., Roberts, J. T., & Carmin, J. 2011. Political economy of the environment. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 37, 221-238.
- Watch [Story of Stuff](#)

October 7: Political Economy II

- *Environment and Society*, pp.175-177, 253-255
- ◆ Due: *Tapped* Film Commentary

October 9: Environmental Justice

- Paul Mohai, David Pellow, and J. Timmons Roberts. 2009. Environmental Justice. *Annual Review of Environment and Resources* Vol. 34: 405-430

October 14: Social Construction of Nature

- *Environment and Society*, Chapter 8, pp.197-198, 251-252

October 16: Fieldtrip to the Chazen Museum of Art

- ◆ Due “Mapping Environmental Justice”

## **Envisioning a Sustainable Future**

### October 21: True Wealth I

- *True Wealth* Chapter 1-3

### October 23: True Wealth II

- *True Wealth* Chapter 4-5
- ◆ Due “Nature in the Chazen Museum”

### October 28: True Wealth Book Discussion

- Ted Nordhaus and Michael Shellenberger. 2004. “[the Death of Environmentalism](#)”

### October 30: Community Participation Project Workshop

## **Our Concern: Food and Agriculture**

### November 4: The structure of our Agrifood System

- Michael Carolan. 2012. *The Sociology of Food and Agriculture*, Chapter 2 and 3
- ◆ Due: *True Wealth* Book Review

### November 6: Agroecology and Multifunctionality of Agriculture

- OECD. 2001. The classic statement on multifunctionality.
- Buttel and Zepeda. 2002. On the origins of the concept of multifunctionality

### November 11: Agriculture and Communities

(Guest Speaker Scott Laeser on Community Support Agriculture)

- Read the website of [Plowshare & Priare Farm](#)
- Branden Born, and Mark Purcell. 2006. "Avoiding the local trap scale and food systems in planning research."
- ◆ Due: Eat Local Challenge

### November 13: Agriculture, Food and Culture I

- *Environment and Society*, Chapter 16: French Fries
- Guthman, Julie. "Fast food/organic food: Reflexive tastes and the making of 'yuppie chow'." *Social & Cultural Geography* 4, no. 1 (2003): 45-58.

### November 18: Agriculture, Food and Culture II

- E.N. Anderson. 2014. “Me, myself and others: Food as Social Marker” Chapter 9 in *Everyone Eats: Understanding Food and Culture*. (available through UW EBL library)
- Selection from Bourdieu’s *Distinction*
- The Hunt for General Tso: [https://www.ted.com/talks/jennifer\\_8\\_lee\\_looks\\_for\\_general\\_tso](https://www.ted.com/talks/jennifer_8_lee_looks_for_general_tso)

## **Our Concern: Climate Change**

### November 20: Sociology of Climate Change

- *Environment and Society*, Chapter 9: Carbon Dioxide
- Bill McKibben. [Global Warming's Terrifying New Math](#). Rolling Stone. July 19, 2012
- Naomi Klein. [Capitalism vs. the Climate](#). The Nation. November 9, 2011

### November 25: Why we disagree about climate change?

- [Global Warming's Six Americas Report](#), summary and overview
- Mike Hulme. 2010. *Why we disagree about climate change*. Chapter 1
- Dunlap, R. E., & McCright, A. M. 2011. Organized climate change denial. *The Oxford handbook of climate change and society*, 144-160.
- ◆ Due: Food Cultural Alternatives

### November 27-30 Thanksgiving Recess

### December 2: Climate Justice

- Roberts, J. Timmons, and Bradley C. Parks. 2007. *A climate of injustice: Global inequality, North-South politics, and climate policy*. Chapter 1
- [Climate Justice for a Changing Planet: A Primer for Policy Makers and NGOs](#), The United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service
- ◆ Due: Self-Reflection on Climate Change Knowledge

### December 4: In-class documentary *Chasing Ice*

### December 9: The Divestment Campaign (Potential Guest Speaker)

### December 11: Conclusion Remarks

- ◆ Due (in dropbox): Film Commentary *Chasing Ice*
- ◆ **Final Paper due December 14, 1159pm in Learn@UW's dropbox.**